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MATTHEW ARNOLD'S "STUDY OF POETRY" SIXTY YEARS AFTER

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It is now just sixty years since a collection of poetry was published in England under the editorship of a man whose destiny it was to share the notorious obscurity of Mr. Gaskell and Whistler's father. The editor was none other than Mr. Humphry Ward; his work, a four-volume anthology, *The English Poets*. As the first publication of this kind to gain wide acceptance in the schools, the work may be regarded as the direct forerunner of our contemporary stock in trade—the anthology for the survey course. Its Introduction was written by Mrs. Humphry Ward's distinguished uncle, Matthew Arnold, and was later published elsewhere under the title "The Study of Poetry." A notably sane commentary upon method in literary study, this introductory essay has been widely known and, after our grudging fashion, admired as an example of Arnold's critical prose. Unfortunately, however, our admiration has not extended to include serious application of Arnold's principles. His concrete suggestions, even though they concern matters as perplexing to the reader of today as to him of 1880, have been not so much disregarded as missed altogether. We have for the most part ignored the fact that, at the very moment that Arnold was lending the prestige of his introduction to the anthology, he was careful to point out dangers inherent in any such anthological view of literature. No one could have been more explicit in sounding the warning, but his counsel went largely unheeded. The reader of today, indeed, who reviews the points

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which Arnold made is likely to think them a comprehensive summary of those very evils which have beset our own study of literature. Ironically enough, the anthologies and literature courses which sin most gravely do commonly include this essay of Arnold's—not, however, as an introductory view of literary study but merely as one more literary specimen duly offered for consideration in its proper chronological position. We have asked students to relate the essay to its social and historical background; we have discoursed upon Arnold's conjectural love for a hypothetical Marguerite; we have given examinations of the most austere objectivity. But it may be doubted that we have read the essay.

Arnold begins by describing two fallacies which tend to mislead us in the study of poetry. The first of these is the temptation to turn from the study of poetry to the study of its history—a temptation not unfamiliar today. On the assumption that whatever pertains to a poet or his times is of possible relevance to the complete understanding of his works, scholars professing a concern for poetry undertake philological groundwork which requires a thorough spading of every detail of a man's life, his personal habits, his literary affinities, the girlhood of his mother, and the sources of his father's income. Too often the result is complete distortion of values. It is not so much that historical studies are irrelevant as that the student may become preoccupied with them and stop short of their ultimate application to literature. As Arnold himself remarks:

It may be said that the more we know about a classic the better we shall enjoy him; and, if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and will of perfect steadfastness, this might be true in fact as it is in theory. . . . The investigator of "historic origins" in poetry . . . ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations.

He ought, indeed; but, as Arnold points out, the scholar often is necessarily concerned with second-rate work and is not unnaturally inclined to "over-rate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him." Arnold is careful to indicate that he is not decrying historical studies in themselves; indeed, in this very essay he applies historical fact advantageously to the interpretation of poetry. But he insists that such studies are not to take the place of poetry itself; he shows that they may contribute to the study of poetry, but he

warns that they sometimes tend to distort or even prevent the historian's reading of the poets.

The second fallacy which Arnold describes causes us to attach undue importance to a poem which chances to touch upon some enthusiasm of our own, some aspect of experience which moves us for personal reasons, some belief which is, or has been, of special importance to us. This danger of overestimating or underestimating a poem because of the coincidence of a personal attachment for its subject or because of chance adherence to the doctrine or attitude voiced by the poet has been the subject of some of I. A. Richards' most cogent remarks concerning our reading of poetry. It is evident that a very great deal of our reading is vitiated by the intrusion of nonpoetic coincidence. And although not many of us, perhaps, would care to boast ourselves entirely free from the danger, there is at least no excuse for our being blandly unaware of it. Nor can contemporary critics deem themselves in any sense the discoverers of what Arnold, sixty years ago, was calling the "personal" fallacy.

Now there is nothing particularly novel in what Arnold says of either of these two fallacies; he merely states each briefly, assuming our ready understanding of them. What is striking, however, is that in this essay we find a criticism of both fallacies voiced by one and the same author. Being errors of a very different sort, they have often been pointed out separately by writers who challenge the one at the very moment they practice the other. Scholar-baiting has the dignity of antiquity, but so, too, has the scholar's reply that without grounding in solid fact a reader's judgment of literature is superficial, often quite beside the mark, almost certainly to some degree sentimental. Contemporary criticism of the scholarly method is often vigorous and sometimes heated; but all too often it is voiced by dilettantes who are themselves prone to rely upon purely subjective judgments—a circumstance which has been duly noted down and filed on three-by-five cards by the driest of dusty scholars! Is there no avoiding one of these errors without falling into its contrary? Arnold thought there was, and with Victorian concern for finding a middle ground he devoted much of his essay to a definition of a *via media* for the student.

He insists first of all that we must not lose sight of our purpose.

We are to search for the truly excellent in poetry, and we must undertake to keep the search "fixedly in our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry." Although he does not offer us any pat definition of poetry, he proceeds immediately to the problem of recognizing it when we see it. No one, to be sure, has ever offered any final solution to this problem, but Arnold's suggestions in this essay have at least the merit of going to the heart of a matter which most tracts on educational theory adroitly ignore. Arnold says, in brief, that we are to recognize poetic merit, not by reference to any set of abstract aesthetic principles, but rather by comparison with poetry which the world has acknowledged to be supremely representative of the art. Specifically, he quotes lines from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton for use as touchstones in the judgment of poetry. If, then, the final judgment remains a subjective one, it is at any rate a judgment founded on something other than mere personal whim. It arises from knowledge—knowledge which is relevant to the problem because it is knowledge of great literature itself rather than of facts *about* literature. The method has, perhaps, no philosophic finality, but there is virtue in Arnold's defense:

Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples—to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognized by being felt in the verse of the master than by being perused in the prose of the critic.

Whatever may be said of the deficiencies of the "touchstone" method—and quite possibly it is, in its way, only a pedagogical short-cut—a number of its implications are of the utmost importance to the student. The whole approach has at least the virtue of relevance.

Perhaps nothing in Arnold is of more fundamental importance to the student of literature than the assumption which permeates the essay—an attitude which Arnold took as a matter of course but which we seem in some measure to have lost sight of—namely, that literary studies are necessarily centered about questions of value. He is most explicit on this point when he paraphrases Sainte-Beuve:

In poetry . . . charlatanism shall find no entrance. . . . Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is

charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry, the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance.

Such a passage as this need only be contrasted with introductions to currently popular anthologies to see how far we are removed from a time when an anthology of English poetry could carry Arnold's introductory words to the student. In extenuation of the writers of present-day introductions it may be urged that such matters as those Arnold concerned himself with are now taken for granted. This would be more convincing, however, were it not in apparent conflict with so much actual practice in the classroom and in the private study. For there we seem too often to have forgotten the basic assumptions of literary study. We concern ourselves with the facts of a poet's literary and personal life—and not always the important facts so much as those we can label, with euphemistic modesty, "hitherto unnoted." We consider with particular relish the social significance of a man's writings, or we purge his work of textual errors. I readily acknowledge that such activity has its value and, for many of us, its great fascination. But we must not lose sight of the fact that as an approach to literature all this is quite beside the point unless by its aid literature is somehow and ultimately approached. For, to the degree that we are true students of literature, our concern is with relative values in literature rather than with anything else. Ours must be the task of discriminating between inferior and superior in poetry, of recognizing poetic merit without reference either to a poet's alleged historical importance or to his interest in subjects personally congenial or uncongenial to the reader. Such a task does not always lend itself readily to pedagogical convenience, and in a day of mass-production education pedagogical convenience is necessarily a matter of concern to all who labor on the assembly line. But, if we permit a regard for efficiency and ease of production to distract us from our essential purpose, we shall miss poetry altogether. The most ingenious educational devices will be useless in teaching literature unless by their use we somehow succeed in teaching literature.

The whole duty of literary scholarship may be said to be sum-

marized in Arnold's description of the attitude we are to assume toward a writer:

If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic . . . then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative; this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry. Everything which interferes with it, which hinders it, is injurious.

Not only is this search for superiority our chief duty; it is the great distinction of literary studies. Whereas the social scientist is of necessity concerned with the statistically ascertained average, the student of poetry focuses his attention upon the distinguished, even the unique. His whole thought is for the very best wherever in letters it manifests itself. Inequality is the law of his province, and his must be the task of recognizing that inequality, ever alert to manifestations of the truly excellent but ever vigilant for the intrusion of mediocrity. It is in this sense, indeed, that poetry assumes the role which Arnold assigns it—that of being a criticism of life. For the world of poetry is an ordered world which by its very existence constitutes a criticism of the chaos of human affairs. In a sense both the *Iliad* and the *World Almanac* summarize the state of the world; but, whereas the almanac simply tabulates as superior machines can tabulate, the poem views man with an eye of comprehensive intelligence. Homer analyzes, but, more important still, he performs a synthesis in the act of creating his poem. He shows a world very like our own, but with a difference. And that difference is inescapably a criticism of the world we know. Our concern, as students of poetry, is with the process by which the bare facts of human existence, observed by the poet, are transmuted by his art to ordered truth. It is only when we sense this that we can begin to comprehend the criticism of life which is implicit in poetry.

The phrase "criticism of life" has not had a happy history, for it has lent itself too readily to the uses of the unimaginative student in search of a "Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul" kind of truth. This is by no means what Arnold meant by "the powerful application of ideas to life," as a reading of this essay clearly shows.

He meant nothing so easy or obvious as this. The conception that literature has some bearing upon life is deeply imbedded in all Arnold's thinking, but the criticism-of-life doctrine was not fully stated until Arnold wrote his essay on Wordsworth in 1879. In that essay Arnold said, "Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life. . . . The greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question: How to live." Those who, like T. S. Eliot, wish to condemn the theory usually quote this phrasing of it. But Arnold himself evidently felt that the idea had been unfortunately expressed, for a year later when he came to write his Introduction to Ward's anthology he saw fit to add an important qualification. "Poetry," he then wrote, "is a criticism of life *under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.*" (Italics mine.) It is not enough, that is, for the poet to bring his ideas to bear upon ethical problems; he must do it in the way of the poets rather than in that of the homilists. He must offer a poetic interpretation of human experience, and he must communicate it by poetic means. Poetry is both substance and technique, and neither is complete in itself. This circumstance, however obvious it may superficially appear, cannot be too strictly insisted upon. Far too many students, and not a few teachers, find their poetic truths too easily—which is to say they do not find them at all. The thing which we call a poem is not a bare, obvious truth but one so subtle as to be understood only when the artistry of the poet is grasped and substance and form are seen to coalesce into a harmonious, organic whole. Neither mere metrical cleverness nor sincere belief in a concept gives us a poem. Arnold has something to say of all this in "The Study of Poetry," but of greatest importance here is his underlying insistence that the whole truth of the poem is of more consequence than anything else about the work. The thing the poet says by the use of poetic methods is important! We may all grant that it is sometimes easier to scan a poem or even to memorize it than to read it; but, unless the communication is completed by its discovery of the reader's mind, the poet's effort is abortive.

We have only to consider the ease with which we casually assign "the next ten pages of the textbook" to recognize how utterly impossible it is for our students to read with anything approximating

complete understanding. It is possible for a student to pass our examinations by scanning his lessons more or less consistently, and it is apparent that this is all we expect of him. "I am inclined to think," writes I. A. Richards, "that four poems are too many for a week's reading—absurd though this suggestion will seem to those godlike lords of the syllabus-world who think that the whole of English literature can be perused with profit in about a year!" Although some think that Richards exaggerates the value to the student of such intensive work, it must be granted, I think, that he is at least right where we are commonly wrong: he thinks poetry is to be considered carefully and as poetry. It must have been some such thought as this which perturbed Arnold as he considered the four-volume anthology to which he was writing an introduction. At any rate, in his most carefully considered prose he said:

In the present work it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. *We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it.* [Italics mine.]

But if Arnold admonishes us to take poetry seriously, he likewise requires the poets themselves to conform to the Aristotelian principle of high seriousness. In the opinion of both T. S. Eliot and Lionel Trilling, Arnold makes altogether too much of this requirement, and I think no one will find it easy to explain away his partial rejection of Chaucer because of that poet's failure in seriousness. I suspect, however, that if Arnold is wrong in the emphasis he places upon high seriousness in poetry, he is so mainly because he is overstating a case against a growing tendency which he noted in contemporary English poetry. For Arnold notoriously does this in his writing; continually he exaggerates his criticism in proportion to the exaggeration he finds in the evil he is attacking. He intended his Introduction to Ward's *English Poets* as practical counsel rather than as abstract criticism, and in it he concerned himself with problems which immediately confront the student. One of his first warnings points out the danger of overestimating contemporary poetry or exaggerating the importance of a poet merely because he is coeval with

the reader. On this subject Arnold is not too explicit, but he undeniably devotes most of the essay to arming his readers against poetasters—celebrants of the trivial. If it be recalled that *fin de siècle* decadence was just then beginning to become evident in national taste, that the second and much enlarged edition of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* had just appeared, it will seem highly possible that here again we find an instance of Arnold's preaching the particular doctrine which seemed to him most needful at the moment. And, although poetry has long since recovered from the decadence into which it was then falling, it is by no means certain that our teaching has regained its vigor. Much of the poetry we ask our students to consider is essentially trivial in character, and even when we assign poetry of solidity, our approach to it is certainly not always designed to discover the poet's high seriousness.

Whatever the critics finally conclude as to Arnold's theory, we who are teachers and students of poetry can well afford to remind ourselves that we, at least, must take poetry seriously and that we must be forever dissatisfied with any study which leaves us short of whatever seriousness is to be found in a poet. Only by taking this attitude toward our pursuits can we justify the claims we make for the dignity and worth of our role in education. Unfortunately, we do not always use words in their strict sense when we speak of poetry—a fact which Arnold deplors in this essay as "a dangerous abuse of language"—but it might be well for us to respect poetry in our private studies as much as we praise it in our public protestations. It is at least possible that some of our confusion would be resolved if we tried taking poetry seriously. We have tried everything else.

"In the present work," said Arnold—and we may apply his words to most of our courses in literature—"we are sure of the frequent temptation to adopt the historic estimate, or the personal estimate, and to forget the real estimate; which latter, nevertheless, we must employ if we are to make poetry yield us its full benefit." His fears were well grounded. We now know that chronological surveys of literature may indeed distract attention from poetry and greatly overemphasize literary history, even though the pedagogical convenience of such literary *char-à-banc* tours has apparently established them in our program. They have an undeniable attraction for teachers who find it vastly easier to discourse on historical back-

grounds and to exclaim over personal judgments than to examine poetry on its merits as poetry. Eventualities have certainly in some measure justified the fears Arnold expressed sixty years ago, but his was by no means a Cassandra voice. If he saw certain dangers in the historical survey of literature, he suggested remedies and had a high faith in the possibilities of literary study. "A collection like the present," he concludes, and again we may apply his words to our own anthologies and our own courses:

A collection like the present offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real. . . . At any rate . . . the benefit of being able clearly to feel and deeply to enjoy the best, the truly classic, in poetry is an end . . . of supreme importance. We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers, and masses of a common sort of literature; that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature, and that to provide it is becoming a vast and profitable industry. Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world, in spite of momentary appearances; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

Who is to say, sixty years after, that Arnold's faith in literature is less timely than his doubts?

I TEACH NEGRO LITERATURE

NICK AARON FORD¹

"I teach Negro literature," I told a group of new acquaintances on a recent vacation tour through the South.

"How can you ever find enough of that to teach?" seriously asked one of my listeners. Others expressed their utter bewilderment by raised eyebrows and furtive glances.

If my audience had been nonacademic I would have been less sur-

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prised at the reaction, but every member was a college graduate and a teacher. They were all Negroes, proud of their roles as leaders for a rising generation, yet unashamedly ignorant of the existence of a Negro literature.

As I sat there among my new-found friends, I had a sudden feeling of loneliness. I felt that a dozen corpses had taken the places of my erstwhile companions. How could they have been intellectually alive all these years, I thought, and know nothing of the literature of their own people. They must be dead fossils of a lost generation, I mused. Could it be possible that Negro youths could pass through high school and college under the guidance of their own teachers and emerge with degrees without knowing anything of the literary achievements of their race?

Suddenly the experiences of my own school days bobbed up before me. Yes, I admitted, it is possible. For even though I was an English major, when I received the A.B. degree I knew of only one Negro poet—Paul Laurence Dunbar. I recollected also that my knowledge of Dunbar's poetry was not the result of my study of American literature but rather the interest of a Sunday-school teacher who taught me recitations for Children's Day. Four years after graduation, while heading the department of English at a Negro college, I was shocked to discover that Negroes other than Dunbar and Booker T. Washington had written books worthy of consideration. Such reminiscences were a godsend, for now I could easily forgive my friends for their ignorance and proceed to share with them, without bitterness, my knowledge and convictions generated over a five-year period as teacher of Negro literature.

Answering my challenger's query, I observed, "It isn't a question of finding enough to teach; it is rather a question of finding enough time to teach what is there to be taught. I find that the three-hour course which I offer could be lengthened to six with much better results."

The high-school principal, who boasted of the largest enrolment for his school in the state, was ready with a hot rejoinder: "Why don't you teach American literature?" he began. "We are American, aren't we? Negro poets, essayists, and novelists are Americans, aren't they? Then why don't you treat them as such? We complain

of the evils of segregation, yet you are introducing a new type of segregation. The quicker that type of thing is discontinued, the better it will be for the race."

"Is American literature taught in your school?" I asked.

"Certainly!" he replied. "It's a required subject."

"How many Negro writers are studied in the course?" I inquired.

"Mrs. Dodge [not her real name] can tell you," he said, pointing to an attractive matron sitting quietly in the corner. Her first impulse, it appeared, was to run; but, thinking of the consequence of such a cowardly act, she screwed up her courage and decided to stand her ground with the truth.

"We follow the text adopted by the state," she evaded.

"What percentage of it is devoted to the study of Negro writers?" I countered.

"They are not mentioned," she admitted.

"Since we represent 10 per cent of the population of America, don't you think a state-adopted text should give at least 10 per cent of its space to a presentation of the Negro's contributions?" I asked.

"If they are up to standard," she replied.

By this time the entire group was listening attentively. The principal had lost his early antagonism and appeared to be interested in a fair solution of the problem. He questioned Mrs. Dodge pointedly: "There must be some mention of Negro authors in the book, isn't there, Mrs. Dodge?"

"Not at all," she reiterated.

"I must beg your pardon, professor," he apologized; "I was sure the Negro writer was represented in our text on American literature. Perhaps we shall ask the state for permission to change texts. Can you recommend one for us, professor, that will at least mention the worthy Negro poets?"

"I have examined scores, but I have yet to find one written for high-school use that devotes any space to the Negro author," I replied.

Then facing the whole group, I asked, "Which of our authors do you think deserve such recognition?"

There was a long silence. Mrs. Dodge drew out a handkerchief from her pocketbook and proceeded to blow her nose continuously.

"Suppose you give us your opinion, professor," finally suggested the president of the P.T.A.

"If you don't object," I began tactfully, "I would like to tell you something of the organization of my course. It may be that such a discussion will better enable you to reach the proper decision on the question raised at the beginning by the principal."

The entire group acquiesced visibly, and I continued.

"The course is organized into three parts: (1) nonfiction, (2) fiction, and (3) poetry. A similar amount of time is given to each part. I start with nonfiction because it serves as a background to the problems and attitudes that form the bases for the fiction and much of the poetry. In the first two parts I include books about Negroes written by white authors so that the student gets a picture of the Negro through the eyes of both races."

"What is the main purpose of the course?" interrupted a member of the group.

"The purpose is threefold: (1) to assist students to become acquainted with a considerable amount of literature about Negroes by Negro and white authors, (2) to assist students to gain a clear understanding of the problems underlying the present status of race relations in America, and (3) to assist students to gain the proper technique of adjusting themselves successfully to a biracial environment.

"The books of nonfiction assigned for study include Benjamin Brawley's *The Negro in Literature and Art* and *Early Negro American Authors*, W. E. B. DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk* and *Black Folk Then and Now*, Nick Aaron Ford's *The Contemporary Negro Novel*, Charles S. Johnson's *The Preface to Racial Understanding*, J. W. Johnson's *Negro Americans*, *What Now?* and *Along This Way* (autobiography), R. R. Moton's *What the Negro Thinks*, Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-education of the Negro*, Edwin Embree's (white) *Brown America*, Vernon Loggins' (white) *The Negro Author*, H. Seligmann's (white) *The Negro Faces America*, E. B. Reuter's (white) *The American Race Problem*, and Buel Gallagher's (white) *American Caste and the Negro College*.

"From a study of the foregoing books we learn the meaning of the

race problem; we learn what the Negro thinks about his condition in America; we learn what his leaders think he can do to improve his lot; we learn why he is segregated, discriminated against, and denied many of the rights and privileges of citizenship by his white fellow-men; and finally we learn what contributions he has made to American culture.

"In the seventh week we begin the study of fiction. The Negro novel is more the creature of environment than that produced by any other group. It fairly screams with condemnation, complaint, abuse, pride, and prejudice. It seems to be a vehicle used to crystallize and present to the world the Negro's opinion of the social order under which he lives."

"But Professor," the principal cut in, "I can't see any good that can come from the study of Negro novels. It seems to me there are too many serious problems facing the race for one to waste his time studying fiction."

"You forget," I counseled, "that the modern novel has done more to focus the attention of the American people upon certain evils in our civilization than any other type of literary production. There are no greater reformers today than Sinclair Lewis and John Steinbeck. Richard Wright's *Native Son*, in spite of its obvious shortcomings, has done more to plead the cause of the underprivileged Negro than anything since Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I believe two or three more novels with the power and significance of *Native Son* depicting other vital phases of the Negro question would revolutionize America's treatment of the Negro within a decade.

"The novels assigned for study include Arna Bontemps's *Drums at Dusk* and *Black Thunder*; W. E. B. DuBois's *Dark Princess*; Jessie Fauset's *There Is Confusion*, *Chinaberry Tree*, *Plum Bun*, and *Comedy, American Style*; R. Fisher's *The Walls of Jericho*; Henderson's *Ollie Miss*; Zora Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; J. W. Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*; Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*; Turpin's *These Low Grounds*; Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint* and *Flight*; Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Dubose Heyward's (white) *Porgy* and *Mamba's Daughters*; Julia Peterkin's (white) *Scarlet Sister Mary*."

Mrs. Dodge, who had been industriously using her pocket notebook, broke in:

"Professor, I want to know about the poetry section."

"The last six weeks are devoted to poetry," I said. "We give most of the time to the six major poets."

"And who are the six major poets?" someone asked.

"They are Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Sterling Brown."

"How many minor poets are there?" continued the same interrogator.

"More than a hundred worthy of serious attention," I suggested. "There are several good anthologies on the market devoted entirely to Negro poetry. Among them are Robert Kerlin's *Negro Poets and Their Poems*, James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (the best of the lot), Countee Cullen's *Caroling Dusk*, and Beatrice Murphy's *Negro Voices*. The latter is a recent publication and contains the work of our youngest poets."

"Was Dunbar the first Negro poet in America?" another asked.

"No, the first Negro poet in America was Jupiter Hammon, a slave belonging to a Mr. Lloyd of Queens Village, Long Island. In 1760 he published the first poem written by a Negro in the United States, eighty lines in length, entitled 'An Evening Thought, Salvation by Christ, with Penitential Cries.' But the first American Negro to issue a volume of poetry was Phillis Wheatley, who arrived in Boston aboard an African slave ship in 1761 and was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. John Wheatley of that city. Twelve years later, at the age of twenty, Phillis published her first book of verse."

"Dunbar is the one who wrote the funny poems in dialect, isn't he?" the principal inquired.

"That's putting it rather crudely," I suggested. "Of course, Dunbar's fame rests chiefly upon his dialect poems, but his most significant verses and many of the most beautiful are written in literary English. What is more hauntingly beautiful than the little gem entitled 'Dawn'?"

An angel clothed in spotless white
Bent down to kiss the sleeping night,

Night woke to blush, the sprite was gone,
Men saw the blush and called it dawn.

Or what is more touching than the verse inscribed upon the tablet at the entrance to his home in Dayton, Ohio, which has now been purchased by the state and converted into a memorial shrine?

Because I had loved so deeply
Because I had loved so long
God in his great compassion
Gave me a gift of song.

"Although Dunbar died at the age of thirty-four, he left to his credit six volumes of poems, four volumes of short stories, and four novels. In his biography of the poet, Brawley says: 'By the Negro people he was given a place never accorded to any other man. There have been many men of whom they have been proud, but never another that they loved like this one.'"

"What are the chief contributions of the other five major poets?" queried another member of the audience.

"Beginning with James Weldon Johnson, we may say that the intellectual quality of his verse demands for him a place among the most honored of our generation. His 'Fifty Years,' written in 1913 on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, has been placed by Brander Matthews among the noblest American commemorative poems. The first three stanzas demonstrate something of the quality of the work.

O brothers mine, today we stand
Where half a century sweeps our ken,
Since God, through Lincoln's ready hand,
Struck off our bonds and made us men.

Just fifty years—a winter's day—
As runs the history of a race;
Yet as we look back over the way,
How distant seems our starting place!

Look farther back! Three centuries!
To where a naked shivering score,
Snatched from their haunts across the seas
Stood, wild-eyed, on Virginia's shore.

"But his most original contribution is his volume entitled *God's Trombones*. It is a collection of seven Negro sermons and portrays with miraculous exactness the spirit, fervor, and imagination of the old Negro preacher, who is rapidly passing. For this achievement he was given the Harmon Gold Award. In all, Johnson, who met with a fatal automobile accident two years ago, was the author of ten volumes, including one novel, one anthology, and an autobiography.

"Claude McKay, who was born in Jamaica, British West Indies, is both the most militant and the most perfect poetic technician among the Negro poets. His most famous sonnet, 'If We Must Die,' written in 1919, when race riots were gripping the nation, urged his fellow-men never to compromise. The closing sestet puts it thus:

Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe,
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

But far removed from the blood and fury of conflict he exhibits the other side of his poetic shield in 'After the Winter':

Some day, when trees have shed their leaves
And against the morning's white
The shivering birds beneath the eaves
Have sheltered for the night,
We'll turn our faces southward, love,
Toward the summer isle
Where bamboos spire the shafter grove
And wide-mouthed orchids smile.

"At twenty, while still on his native soil, McKay published *Songs of Jamaica*. This volume immediately set him apart as the Robert Burns of the island and won for him the medal of the Institute of Arts and Sciences. Since his arrival in the United States he has published two volumes of poems, three novels, and his autobiography. He won the Harmon Gold Award for his first novel, *Home to Harlem*.

"Langston Hughes is the most original of the Negro poets. Born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902, he has traveled around the world. He has introduced in his poetry Negro folk and jazz rhythms never utilized before. It is true that Vachel Lindsay made several such

experiments prior to Hughes, but his technique is not as close to the true Negro spirit as Hughes's.

"Hughes has written four volumes of poems, one novel, an autobiography, and several dramas. He, too, has won the Harmon Gold Award for his literary pre-eminence. The audacity of his style and subject matter may be seen from the opening stanza of 'Brass Spittoons':

Clean the spittoons, boy.
 Detroit,
 Chicago,
 Atlantic City,
 Palm Beach.
 Clean the spittoons.
 The steam in hotel kitchens,
 And the smoke in hotel lobbies,
 And the slime in hotel spittoons:
 Part of my life.
 Hey, boy!
 A nickel,
 A dime,
 A dollar,
 Two dollars a day.

The jazz note is apparent in 'Hard Daddy':

I went to ma daddy,
 Says Daddy I have got de blues,
 Went to ma daddy,
 Says Daddy I have got de blues.
 Ma daddy says, Honey,
 Can't you bring no better news?

"But aside from the audacious and the whimsical, Hughes has demonstrated his genius in numerous gems of unchallengeable excellence. I know of no poem in American literature whose imagery is more meaningful, touching, and bewitchingly beautiful than 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers,' which begins:

I've known rivers:
 I've known rivers ancient as the world and older
 than the flow of human blood in human veins.

 My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

"The most classic of the Negro poets is Countee Cullen. Born one year later than Hughes, he shows himself to be exactly opposite to Hughes in his worship of classical style and his insistence upon the use of respectable subject matter. He is the author of four volumes of poems, one anthology, and one novel. He has also won the Harmon Gold Award for literature.

"It has been said that pessimism is a dominant note in Cullen's poetry. Something of the truthfulness of this charge may be seen in an excerpt from one of his best-known poems, 'Yet Do I Marvel':

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind,
 And did He stoop to quibble could tell why
 The little buried mole continues blind,
 Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day die,

 Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
 To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

"The influence of John Keats and his philosophy of beauty upon Cullen is apparent from the last stanza of his 'To John Keats, Poet, at Springtime':

"John Keats is dead," they say, but I
 Who hear your full insistent cry
 In bud and blossom, leaf and tree,
 Know John Keats still writes poetry.
 And while my head is earthly bowed
 To read new life sprung from your shroud,
 Folks seeing me must think it strange
 That merely spring should so derange
 My mind. They do not know that you,
 John Keats, keep revel with me, too.

"Sterling Brown, a professor of Howard University, has done more than any other poet with transforming Negro folklore into epics and ballads. As a critical estimate of him, James Weldon Johnson has this to say in *The Book of American Negro Poetry*: 'He is one of the outstanding poets of the younger group. For the best of his work he has dug his raw material from the great mine of Negro folk poetry. More than any other American poet he has made thematic use of the Negro folk epics and ballads, and because he has done this so sincerely, a false note is rarely heard in his work.' He is the author of

two volumes of poems and two prose commentaries on Negro literature.

"Something of the spirit of his poetry may be gleaned from the opening stanza of 'Odyssey of Big Boy':

Lemme be wid Casey Jones
Lemme be wid Stagolee
Lemme be wid such like men
When Death takes hol' on me
When Death takes hol' on me . . . ;

or the first stanza of this Negro work song in *Southern Road*:

Swing dat hammer—hunh—
Steady, bo,
Swing dat hammer—hunh—
Steady, bo,
Ain't no rush, bebby,
Long ways to go."

My audience had listened patiently. But I could see now signs of restlessness. Too big a dose of this at one time will spoil the effect, I said to myself. Maybe we should change the subject. Before I could indicate my intentions, a final question was posed by the principal:

"This has been quite an enlightenment, professor," he began; "but aren't you leaving half of the problem untouched in your course?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, genuinely puzzled.

"Well," he started, weighing each word, "if white people are to gain the respect for our race that we want them to possess, don't you think their children should be taught Negro literature as well as ours? We can't lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. If we rise at all to a respectable place in the American social order, we must have the assistance of our intelligent white countrymen. Now you have converted me to the value of Negro literature in the schools, but I think it ought to be taught in the white schools as well as in the colored."

I was glad that I had set the principal to thinking in a new trend, but I was determined not to risk the results already attained by continuing the argument.

"I agree with you fully," I concluded, "but we must not sit idly by and wait for that time to come. We must help bring it about. Al-

ready there are signs of a new day. Several important white universities of the South are now teaching courses in Negro history, race relations, and Negro literature. But we as Negro teachers must lead in the movement. We must keep the Negro child ever reminded of the glorious achievements of his people. He in turn will relay it, unconsciously, to his white playmate or working associate or employer. It will ooze out in private conversation, in public gatherings, and in public print. Soon the textbook-makers of the nation will not hesitate to include in all American texts the full story of the Negro's contributions to his country's culture."

TOWARD SIGNIFICANCE IN THE NOVEL

N. ELIZABETH MONROE¹

It has long been a habit with serious people to look down the nose at mention of the novel, which in spite of its vogue has never found an equal footing with the essay or drama or biography. This is in part intellectual snobbery. People like to think they are engaged in a serious intellectual pursuit when they turn to literature, no matter how trivial their preoccupation may in reality be. It is also symptomatic of a long-standing dissatisfaction with the form and substance of fiction.

Novelists, confronted with this criticism, are now on the defensive. In a world given up to a consideration of economics, they have turned to the discussion of social problems or political ideologies to make their art respectable. Others, afraid to commit themselves to any definite point of view, have given their whole attention to aesthetic experiment. While some of these experiments have been valuable, the net result has been to deprive the novel of action and pattern and to decrease its substance. The real task of the novel, which is the re-creation of life in its totality, has almost disappeared under the demands of propagandists and the experiments devised to reinstate it in the stream of literature.

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In spite of this criticism, much of which is deserved, a few recent novelists have made notable achievements in this medium, especially in describing the universal elements of humanity. Dostoevski has extended the range of the novel by describing the terrible depths of the human soul after sin and degradation have almost destroyed the human image. Sigrid Undset has used the novel to search out the hidden, intricate windings of man's conscience and to explore the great themes of passion, remorse, and redemption. Olav Audunsson, the master of Hestviken, kills the man who has betrayed his wife. He cannot confess and make reparation and be at peace because the disclosure would bring shame on his weak and ailing wife. His obligations form a net from which he cannot escape. Yet in the end he realizes that pride, and not his obligation to his wife alone, has kept him from confession. A whole life of suffering derives from his involvement in passion and his inability to confess the mean little sins of lying and deceit. On a smaller scale Ellen Glasgow has emphasized the formal elements of life to describe a society that has almost lost belief in itself through divorcing action from meaning. Her characters are loyal to a code which is separated from its religious and moral bases and which has lost much of its social meaning, simply because this is the code of southern gentility. They act and feel in two entirely separate spheres and have almost lost the clue to their own motives.

Moreover, the latitude permitted the novelist in the extended use of description makes it possible for him to describe not only characters and scenes in great detail but also a whole era in terms that rival the effects of history. That the novel can do this without losing its own identity is clear from the work of novelists like Thackeray, Tolstoy, and Sigrid Undset. *Vanity Fair* is a description of English life during the Waterloo period, but even more than this it is an illustration of human nature dedicating its whole vitality to the things of this world. A letter of Thackeray's to his mother shows that he was trying to describe a group of people living without God. *War and Peace* gives the whole sweep of the Napoleonic Wars without for a minute losing sight of eternal human nature moving behind the scenes. The place is Russia and the characters are Russians, but their story is the eternal story of man; and the place, though care-

fully localized, might be anywhere. Sigrid Undset has described life on the great manors of fourteenth-century Norway but turned the mind inward, away from the pageantry and color of medieval life, to a contemplation of passion and suffering and redemption.

Description applied to a smaller field has enabled the novelist to explore the stream of man's conscious and unconscious mind. Joyce has tried to represent the stream of consciousness dramatically. Proust has extended our knowledge of sensitivity and has tried to recover the treasures of the unconscious through intuition, memory, and dreams, which light up its dark recesses for a moment. Hence it is that he spends so much time in describing dreams and involuntary associations, which he thinks recover most of the riches of the past for us, even our dead. Virginia Woolf has set herself the task of tracing atoms as they fall on the mind. She has turned her attention away from the outside world and conventional patterns of behavior to the mind of man as it knows and feels the world about it. She has not described the stream of consciousness for its own sake but in order to vitalize and complete characters. Taking her clue from Bergson, she has devised a number of experiments to show the disparity between clock time and time on the mind. In *Mrs. Dalloway* time is limited to one day but made to represent a whole lifetime. In *Orlando* time is alternately stretched and contracted to cover three centuries. In *The Waves* Mrs. Woolf represents the passage of time by connecting sensations as they fall on the mind with the ebb and flow of the tide, the sun rising in splendor over the garden, and the birds swelling in chorus as the day comes to an end.

In spite of the occasional remarkable achievement and the ease with which the novel adapts itself to new and subtle uses, the contemporary novel lacks artistic seriousness. Its form has, at one time, been too rigid, tending to cramp the characters and the natural movement of action; again it has been too loose, tending to disappear altogether under the experiments of aesthetic and naturalistic writers. Great themes lying ready to hand have been neglected. Birth and death, toil that overcomes everything, love and hope, sin, suffering, failure, and redemption constitute the eternal story of man. Countless variations may still be played on these themes. There are still themes of wonder and enchantment that release the

imagination of new worlds. Our own times provide themes more or less peculiar to modernity—the diabolical attempt on the part of organized minorities to annihilate religion, the great armies of the dispossessed living in the midst of a rich materialistic civilization without any stake in the soil or in trade, and with no right even to the fruits of their own toil; the loneliness and disintegration of life in great cities when the bonds that unite men have been torn asunder and only mechanical attempts to unite for comfort and protection are left, and the decline of heroism and sanctity before the rising tide of the bourgeois spirit, which reduces all men to the level of tradesmen and politicians and comfort providers.

Dos Passos was very close to realizing some of these themes but failed on the whole because his art suffered from the very disintegration he was trying to describe. He mistakes a disordered impressionism for an imitation of life and refuses to interpret even these superficial aspects of life he has observed. In *Manhattan Transfer* he has tried to describe the disintegration that occurs in a large city where everything is reduced to a mechanism. Men are caught in its grinding wheels; they pace round and round in their cage like monkeys surprised at their own antics, or, following sex and drink, try to forget the futility of their lives. But this is only the crust of disintegration; the author has not looked beneath the surface where sin organizes and decay begins. He has reduced humanity to a level below that of the animals by making men and women sin without cause. They are not moved by desire or pleasure or avarice or any other exorbitant demand on life but are playing with dissipation. Dostoevski has peopled his books with low and debauched characters, but he shows the deterioration going on within their souls and what they hope to gain by their exorbitant acts and under all of this the light of the soul still burning.

Mrs. Woolf's novels offer a striking example of disintegration of form through an incomplete imitation of life. It is apparent that Mrs. Woolf has something important to contribute to the novel, but she has weakened her contribution by turning a means into an end and has sacrificed form in her attempt to vitalize subject matter. Her intuition is delicate and subtle, and her descriptions of sensations as they fall on the mind are sensitive indeed. She has turned

prose into a lyrical instrument that records the delicate rhythms of life, but in the end we have only the sum of these rhythms, not life in its totality. In *The Waves* she experiments with a kind of relative time, recording the reactions of six children to progressive moments in their lives. The result of this experiment resembles a poem on the fluctuations of time. The result as a novel is less adequate. What the characters feel is vivid enough but does not make complete sense or describe character in its entirety. Mrs. Woolf has merely succeeded in enhancing one part of life at the expense of the totality.

This novel ends with a description of the waves breaking on the shore to symbolize the triumph of death over time. Bernard sits at a restaurant table amid the bread crumbs. His phrases have all fallen away from him meaningless. The waiter, who descends upon him frowning angrily, turns into the symbol of death. This scene also ends a long, tedious chapter in which Bernard has reviewed the whole of his life. The last paragraph, which describes the approach of death and Bernard's romantic defense, his sword couched and hair flying, leaves one fatigued and cold. Here is no sense of the grandeur of life, but improvisation with words, and no sense of the quiet completion of man's span of life on earth. To lay this scene beside Thackeray's quiet dismissal of Colonel Newcome is to see the difference between an aesthetic improvisation with words and an imitation of life. Colonel Newcome has returned to his old school, Grey Friars, as a pensioner to die in poverty and almost friendless, after a brilliant career in India and a generous scattering of his substance on those he loved. When the chapel bell begins to toll Thomas Newcome's hands beat time feebly, and, as the last note sounds, he raises his head a little and says "Adsum," as though he were answering roll call in his old school, and dies. Both treatments are romantic, but one humanizes death by its homely little touches; and the other is fantastic. One gives an action in its totality—the life of Colonel Newcome is unrolled through two long volumes, and his death touches us deeply—the other gives us scattered sensations with almost no action, no pattern, no interpretation.

Besides weaknesses in form and substance, there are the demands made on the novel by novelists riding a theory and novelists incapable of theory, both of which tendencies have diverted the novel

from its real task. The attempt to turn the novel into an instrument of propaganda has been a failure from the start. It is true that the novel exists for man and therefore has social obligations; it should not falsify life, either by demeaning it or by romanticizing it, and it ought to describe all of man's nature. But this does not mean that the novel should be turned into direct teaching, for then it becomes didactic and loses aesthetic distance and its place among the arts. Entirely aside from the question whether propaganda is or is not a legitimate function of the novel, it is only fair to observe that the best of the proletarian novelists have had nothing important to say about the causes which enlisted them. They have drearily recorded impressions, following in the wake of an effete aestheticism, have done literary gymnastics, dramatized the stream of consciousness, and lost themselves in denunciation and violence; but, whatever the method, they have consistently refused to interpret what they saw.

Moreover, these writers have not given a complete or sympathetic picture of the poor. Dos Passos has often been credited with sympathy for the poor, especially men and women of Iberian origin who cannot find their level in our money-mad civilization. But it is hard to find more than a sentimental pity in his books, and that misdirected. He pities the poor because they have too little time for sports, sex, drink, and idling. The deprivation of the poor goes much further than this.

John Steinbeck comes closer than his contemporaries to an understanding of the poor and to a dramatic realization of their story. In *The Grapes of Wrath* he succeeds in making the story of the Joads a sincere and moving experience, in spite of his too obvious propaganda and the unnecessarily filthy language. He has not used the Joads to illustrate economic conditions but has made their misfortune and suffering a part of the universal story of man. They carry on in the face of tragedy and defeat without bitterness and despair; they ask no favors, are bent on paying their way, and in spite of poverty can always find a means to help people less fortunate than they. The propaganda of the last part of the book is less successful. Steinbeck has attempted to explain the evils of absentee landlordism in California and organized violence on the part of employers by interpolating chapters on economic conditions between the parts of the

narrative. If his interpretation is correct, it would be more effective in another form. Here it impedes the action of the story, is repeated too often, turns the Joads and all other characters into generalized illustrations of social tyranny, and leaves out of account the other side—the depredations of a shifting population and the abuses of strikers organized under unscrupulous leaders.

The book has some of the flaws of Steinbeck's earlier work. He glorifies the wrong people and the wrong qualities. He expects us to admire Casy, an itinerant preacher, who, after holding evangelistic revivals, is in the habit of taking one or another of the girls of his audience to lie on the grass. When the book opens, he has turned from this life and become a tramp with a philosophic turn of mind, which explains rape and lust and violence as the result of the economic conditions under which people live. This sentimental doctrine cannot explain his hypocrisy as a preacher or any other human failing, though it has much to do with the immediate sufferings of the Joads.

To reject all philosophy is as destructive to the novel as the attempt to make it subserve a cause. Unless the world of fiction is to be a purely imaginary one or a purely individualistic one, it must reflect a reasoned view of life. Novelists like Huxley and Morgan shy away from a definite philosophy, lest it narrow their vision and make them subjective. The exact opposite is to be expected. A novelist who understands man in the abstract is free to spend all his time on his art, instead of improvising on his own experiences. He must know man in this general way, or he will create him in his own image, or invent a conception of him that is meaningless to his readers. One does not have to search far to find Huxley and Morgan and Santayana and Dos Passos in their works. A very cultivated gentleman, dissatisfied with life and skeptical of experience yet unable to commit himself to any dogma, is almost certainly the author in disguise.

One of the curious inconsistencies of these novelists is the attempt to explain their characters in terms of values the authors have sloughed aside as detrimental to an intellectual point of view. The realities of the Christian life are patent nonsense to them, yet their characters must act as though they were true, while knowing they

are not. Their characters are conceived as victims of their environment or their biological urges, as glorified animals living in a free world of sensory experience, as machines, or as bundles of reflexes, yet they are asked to suffer over broken relationships and to do artistic penance for their sins.

An incident from Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* illustrates the inconsistency of searching for a meaning in life after all meaning has been categorically denied. His characters are so bored with their vices that they try to invent a moral code for the mere pleasure of breaking it; their endless discussions of sin show the vicious silliness into which their author has fallen. Lucy Tantamount and Spandrell look with envy on the past when people sinned with energy. Lucy complains that today there are too many policemen—"They don't allow you to stir an eyelid"—but Spandrell, in spite of his disintegration, realizes that if nothing is either right or wrong, then there is no point in having the kind of experience the police interfere with. Her answer—"One's bored"—sums up the plight of the novelist who has denied the validity of morals. There is nothing interesting to write about, nothing that gives point to man's story, if he is free to do anything he likes. If only for the sake of contrast and struggle, the idea of sin must be retained. When novelists fall into the necessity of inventing sin in order to save their characters from boredom, it is little wonder that the novel seems to be running low in vitality.

I have indicated before that the experiments devised to bring life into the novel or to extend its range have stopped short of success because they have been turned into ends in themselves and because novelists have had no adequate notion of form to begin with. There is a tendency among modern novelists who are not provided with a consistent view of life to substitute artifice for the study of man, so that we have novels that make a virtue of being difficult, are too literary, and are interlarded with abstruse symbols and remote literary references. The reader must work these novels out as puzzles or be overawed by learning he cannot make his own. The stream-of-consciousness novelists have succeeded mainly in substituting the cerebral processes for the whole of life. This does not mean that these experiments have failed—merely that the results judged as novels are inadequate. Mrs. Woolf is intrigued by the idea that we can never really know anyone, that life is too delicate for our ap-

prehension. There is truth in this, but one wonders then why she tries to trace the flux of consciousness in novel after novel, as the exact nature of consciousness eludes the most subtle insight. We can observe an action and imagine its causes and effects and by patient observation and love come to understand the pattern of life. But we can only hazard inspired guesses as to what is passing through other people's minds.

Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* is fused into a symbol of love which sheds its light and warmth over a scattered household as the lighthouse pours its radiance over village and seascape. She is always turned toward what is human, fits children and guests into their place, gives her husband a sense of security, and brings him into the circle of life. As a symbol she is lovely, but as a characterization Mrs. Ramsay leaves much to be desired. The novel succeeds, however, because time, and not Mrs. Ramsay, is the center of the book.

D. H. Lawrence experimented in another direction. He tried to restore sex to its proper place in life, but in doing so isolated it and studied it as a mechanism, deliberately scrapping all other human qualities in its favor. Lawrence thought that the relationship between man and woman, which ought to be central in life, was hardened and conventionalized by the forces of materialism. His whole effort was to free it from conventionality and prudishness and make it again the vitalizing force of life. His work certainly tends in the right direction and is a sane influence on the novel. His difficulty is that he stopped short of a complete realization of life. Sex cannot be isolated from other human qualities and studied impersonally and cannot be exalted to the place he gave it without being sign and symbol of divine love. The feeling between Paul and Miriam in *Sons and Lovers* is tormented and unreal; it is never brought into the circle of daily life or completed in tenderness. Lawrence implies that what thwarts it is Paul's feeling for his mother, that what has thwarted his mother is the hardness of her life, but there is more involved than that. Love cannot be separated from everything else in life without defeating itself. Anyone making the experiment finds this out soon enough, but Lawrence insists that, if sex be freed from conventionality and prudishness, it can take the place of religion itself.

Lacking a sense of humor, Lawrence goes to ridiculous lengths with his theory, especially in the conversations of his lovers. Almost

any conversation in *Sons and Lovers* or *The Rainbow* seems ridiculous taken out of its context, and even in context is not credible. In *The Plumed Serpent* Lawrence carries his experiments to their logical extreme. Kate, an Irish woman left alone after two early marriages, begins at forty to feel her spiritual life unfolding naturally, comes to Mexico, is repelled and yet fascinated by what she sees. She wants to be with other people whose spiritual life is unfolding in this same natural way and thinks she finds this silence and ease in the Indians. Reduced to a formula, the story sounds absurd; but, in spite of its baldness and romantic distortion, the novel has a simple integrity that cannot be discounted. Kate's thought—"The thing called 'life' is just a mistake we have made in our own minds. Why persist in the mistake any further?"—gives the gist of Lawrence's theory. Since the civilization man has made for himself is bad, he needs to turn away from it to the primitive sources of life. But only a man like Lawrence would be capable of imagining a dinner party at which the topic of conversation is the importance of the moment of coition in determining the future of the race. Mexico is turned toward helplessness and despair because of the manner in which Mexicans have mated with Indian women. As a theory this has something to recommend it, but as a dinner-table conversation spread over three pages of a novel it is absurd.

Had Lawrence had the gift of humor he might have made a great contribution to the novel. As it is, he has described one phase of man's dislocation but has not indicated his center, which is God—not the dark, silent stream of blood and not the merging of two personalities. He has tried to free sex from its rational end, the propagation of the race, and has tried to make of blood a religion in itself. We have only to observe what a theory like this becomes in the hands of unscrupulous politicians to realize its dangers.

Other experiments with the novel have failed for similar reasons. The well-made novel was too rigid, sacrificing life to the demands of form. Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* is one of the best works of its kind, a very good book, but not a great one, because it is extended too far for its subject matter. Experiments in realism and naturalism have focused attention on externalities and on the lowest elements of human life.

This brings us face to face with the final difficulty of the novel, which derives from the nature of its task. If the novel is to be great, it must re-create human experience in its totality. Nothing is too small or too mean or too noble to find a place in the story of man. It is here that the modern novel has failed, because it has not known the nature of man in all its complexity and has therefore been unable to tell his story completely.

This failure is symptomatic of the failure of all human values in our time. The real tragedy of today is the disappearance of man. Writers no longer begin their work with an idea of man in the abstract, but must depend on theory or subjective experience. It is no longer possible to describe human nature in terms that will be understood and accepted by more than a handful of men. Large sections of the public have scrapped their belief in sin, so that the novelist has no consistent way of looking at man; he is thrown back on a purely individualistic interpretation or no interpretation at all or the substitution of himself for a study of the eternally human or an attempt to survey man at all times from the comic point of view. The novelist cannot interpret what is no longer existent; if there be no law, no eternal human nature, no sin, there can be no story to tell about man. The end of this process will be the disappearance of the novel from the field of the arts.

ARE WE DOWNHEARTED?¹

ERNEST BERNBAUM²

When your chairman, Professor Warner G. Rice, asked me to speak upon the prospects now confronting the teaching of literature in a war-torn world, it seemed to me that I was drafted to answer the recurrent question: Are we downhearted? When I was in college forty years ago, it was my joyous privilege to assist in the creation of that slogan. Our football team had been four times defeated by lesser rivals; the day of the Yale game was approaching;

¹ Address given at the N.C.T.E. College and Junior College luncheon meeting, Chicago, November 22.

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our prospects were hopelessly bad. One evening a cry was heard in the yard: Are we downhearted? and from scores of windows immediately rang the reply: No! No! No! The defiant question and answer made its way around the English-speaking world. In the war of 1914-18 a British regiment shouted to their comrades in some fire-wrecked trenches: Are we downhearted? After a pause—a dreadful pause—a blood-stained specter, the sole survivor, raised himself from the trench, shouted No! with his last breath, and fell back dead. A foreign observer exclaimed that English heroism was perfectly expressed in that gesture.

In trying to answer this question, I find myself in an unfamiliar situation. Usually I am endeavoring to explain demonstrable facts, or arguing for or against a proposition on the basis of conclusive evidence. Now, for the first time in twenty-five years of professorial life, I am compelled to deal with controversial politics, and, what is even more unusual, to engage in predictions. I am asked to speak about our future. I offer you my beliefs and surmises regarding it, not for the purpose of persuading you to agree with them, but merely as the beliefs and surmises of one whose life has been devoted to the interpretation of literature, and who is deeply interested in the future of his fellow-teachers. I am not trying to prove anything. I am not trying to persuade you to accept anything I say. All I hope to do is to make perfectly clear my own confession of faith and my reasons for that faith.

If we could create an ideal world in which our subject—literature—would flourish, we should make one which combined a moderate degree of prosperity, widespread among the common people, with a minimum of luxury and hectic dissipation, and a popular preference for pleasures of a simple and natural kind. We were on our way in that direction—the enjoyment of wholesome out-of-door relaxation in state and national reservations, the growth of popular appreciation of good music and art and stage plays and better motion pictures. The future looked bright for a teacher whose cause was the dissemination of literary appreciation and of general culture.

But then arose the two black clouds of depression at home and war abroad, hiding the bright vision, and instilling fears that we may never behold it again.

Now we have three possibilities to face. First, the worst, the defeat of Great Britain, the loss of the British fleet, the dismemberment of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and its sinking to the status of a third-rate power. That possibility, which would mean the speedy end of democracy throughout the world, I shall not consider, not because it is too horrible to contemplate, but because I believe Great Britain has already proved to be too strong and too heroic to be thus utterly beaten.

The second possibility is a stalemate, and a peace under which Britain keeps most of her empire, though seriously weakened by such losses as Gibraltar and Suez. She would concede to the Nazis the control of all western Europe, together with huge colonial possessions formerly belonging to Belgium, Holland, France, etc. And Italy, Russia, and Japan would be granted their *Lebensraum* as they conceive it. Some ostrich-headed Americans regard such a possible settlement with dim-witted equanimity, as if it were no concern of ours. In point of fact, such an outcome would be for us almost as perilous as Britain's complete defeat. It would leave Britain nominally still in being, but its government in control of friends of the Nazis, and its people so exhausted economically that for several generations it could offer no serious resistance to Nazi domination.

What would be the position of the United States after such a stalemate peace? Even though it had had time to become partially prepared, it would be confronted by the enmity and contempt of the most powerful military and economic force in the entire world. A triumphant Germany would be able to lay down the law to us as well as to the rest of the nations. With its new colonial possessions it could drive the United States out of all the markets of the world. None of our agricultural or industrial products could be sold abroad anywhere, except by German consent. In that situation we should have our choice of two ways: either fight Germany to regain our freedom of the seas—which would be suicidal though heroic—or make an agreement with the Nazis on Nazi terms.

The Nazis have repeatedly shown that they will not come to terms with other nations unless those nations are led by men who are sympathetic with Nazi principles and who will stamp out anti-Nazi principles in their own lands. In both Sweden and Switzerland Germany is seriously demanding that anti-Nazi speakers, news-

papers, radios, motion pictures, etc., be suppressed; else those countries will be regarded as enemies. The United States could never obtain from the Nazis the treaties necessary to give it a reasonable degree of freedom in foreign trade and foreign affairs unless it had chosen an appeasing president and Congress, pledged to suppress freedom of speech, press, teaching, etc., whenever such freedom was used in criticism of Nazi ideas. In short, the danger would not be merely political and economic, it would involve the survival of our cultural values as well. The Nazis are evil, but not stupid; they know that cultural values are not merely decorative, but are to political and economic values what the root is to the tree. No world-system, as they themselves declare, can "permanently exist half-Nazi and half-free." A stalemate peace would place disastrous limitations upon our free way of life.

It is, therefore, only the third possibility that we can face without dismay—the possibility of Britain's decisive victory and Hitler's downfall, followed by a peace which shall restore freedom and justice to *all* the peoples of Europe, including the Germans. It is my firm faith that such a victory will finally be won and that such a peace can and will be made.

But even in that happy event our immediate prospects will be full of difficulties. Not only in Europe but throughout most of the world, the standard of living will be sharply lowered for a long, long time. Even a victorious England will stagger under a huge load of taxation to pay for the war; and we cannot expect such an England to resume making the rich contributions to literary scholarship, to criticism, and to creative literature that we have hitherto expected.

Our own country, even though it avoids being drawn into the war, even if at its conclusion, because of British victory, it remains free, still democratic within, still uncoerced from without, must, though an innocent bystander, be gravely affected. It will have diverted a large portion of its productive efforts to military, i.e., non-productive, ends. The money spent for one year's training of a million soldiers obviously cannot be spent for the education of a million students in school or college. Our taxes, direct and indirect, will be doubled at least, more probably trebled or quadrupled; and the

national debt which we shall saddle upon our descendants will be the largest in our history. That much is certain.

Much worse results will ensue if some of the proposals now made in Washington are followed. An adviser of the National Defense Commission, Mr. Richard Gilbert, admitting that the three to four billion dollars hitherto annually spent to get rid of unemployment have failed to achieve that result, now declares that we should annually pour forth twelve to sixteen billion dollars, incurring a deficit to that amount. If such a road is taken, the national credit will be exhausted within a year or two; capital levies and inflation will follow, with the usual results—complete economic ruin of the middle classes and the laboring class as well. I am not predicting such a course; but it is a serious danger; and if it were to descend upon us, it would mean the prostration for many years of all that you and I most care for.

Even under the best conditions that we can expect after the war, even though inflation is avoided, we should prepare ourselves to face, during at least the next five years, conditions very unfavorable to our cause. The depression and governmental wastefulness have caused a large lowering in the return from investments. The funds of private universities are yielding less and less; one of them reports that it now receives \$1,500,000 less income a year than formerly. State universities, because of enormous increases of state expenditures for preparedness, will probably be expected to accept much smaller appropriations. All kinds of universities and colleges will be forced to cut their budgets to the bone. Where are the cuts most likely to be made? You all know the answer. They will not be made in the departments of practical and scientific subjects which can plausibly plead that they are essential to national defense. They will be made in departments concerned with the humanities. The pleas will be made before courts prejudiced against us. It is sad but true that *most* principals of schools, deans of colleges, and presidents of universities, are not genuinely interested in art or literature, have only a superficial acquaintance with them, and are densely ignorant of their cultural importance to human life. Most administrators look upon departments of literature as merely service departments, unfortunately needed to teach students to read foreign

languages and to write their own with an approach to intelligibility. Their other activities are merely decorative and justifiable only in flush times.

We face, then, a lower standard of living, a setback to cultural advances, and an exaltation of military aims to the leading place in national life. The draftee, the recruit, will be the center of interest and admiration. The military mind and the military virtues will be emphasized. I do not deny that those are true virtues. I am the son of a naval officer in our Civil War, and I am proud of his record. I recognize the need of the military virtues in our present danger. What I contend is that those virtues are not the highest in the human scale, not as high as the free and nimble intelligence and the humane wisdom which the humanities endeavor to foster.

Are we downhearted? In a limited sense, yes. We cannot help being saddened by the probability that during the immediate future the values that are dearest to us will be forced into the background. We are facing probably five or ten very lean years. But I at least am not downhearted with respect to our long-range prospects. I am sure that our people, after a period of fanatical concentration upon practical, economic, and military ends, will become aware of a great void in their hearts and minds. To a highly prosperous society, immersed in sensuous luxury, literature and the arts may be merely an additional ornamental diversion. To the kind of society that we shall have, to a people obliged to work hard and to live simply, they are the best obtainable reliefs in an otherwise dreary existence. The soul of America will again yearn for the pleasures and comforts of literature even as "the hart panteth after the water-brooks"—for the living waters that refresh the soul.

To me it seems that the chief qualities of English and American literature, which we are privileged to interpret to our students, are fourfold. First, a profound sense of the tragic dignity of man (*Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Samson Agonistes*). Second, delight in the greatest possible varieties of individual character (Chaucer, Shakespeare, Sterne, Dickens). Third, an abiding sense of the need for fellowship (exemplified in William James's words to the lonely freshman who at the end of his first week complained that he had made acquaintance with nobody: "Don't worry, my boy; it won't be long before

you know a lot of fellows who are just as queer as you are—each queer in his own way!”). Fourth, a unique genius for loving companionship with nature (Wordsworth, Thoreau, Jefferies, Burroughs). That is what we have to offer to our people; and they, after a concentrated diet of prosaic materialism, brute force, regimentation, fear, and hate, will in due time receive it again with deep gratitude and joy.

Sursum corda! There *are* lions in the path before us; but we should meet them as Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* was bidden to do: “Fear not the lions, for they are chained; and are placed there for trial of faith where it is, and for the discovery of those that have none.” Let us not forget that we are so fortunate as to be teaching the literature of a people that is still living, and of a people which is manifesting today the same traits which it has shown in the past. The present war is proving that the British are not the degenerate heirs of a once glorious nation, but men and women worthy of their heroic forebears. Nothing more courageous was done at Agincourt, Trafalgar, or Waterloo than at Dunkerque. Even more important than the exploits of their soldiers, seamen, and air force, has been the strength of character, the morale, shown by the civilian population—men, women, and children—who have met the destruction of their homes, the death or crippling of their families, with a defiant courage and lightheartedness that will never be forgotten. An aged London woman, sitting amid the ruins of her home, grimly said: “Well, since there been’t no ’appiness no more in this world, we’ll just ’ave to be ’appy without it!” There was the cockney rejoinder to Nazi attempts at terrorizing; and it strikes one of the keynotes heard in English literature down the centuries.

Last week, after the raid on Coventry, King George made an unexpected visit to that devastated city. As he mournfully gazed at the ruins of St. Michael's Cathedral, a group of workmen digging in the wreckage caught sight of him; and again the cry arose: “Are we downhearted?” And again arose the response from men, women, and children standing among their dead: “No! No! No!” In that same spirit let us, facing the difficult years that lie before us, try our very best to carry on!

THE ENGLISH INSTITUTE

RUDOLF KIRK¹

The English Institute came into being because a group of men and women engaged in the study of English and American literature felt the need for discussion. These people had, for better or for worse, left the graduate schools behind and were now immersed in teaching. They were attempting, at the same time, to carry on their own studies, frequently far away from the greatest libraries, and, what was worse, far from other scholars engaged in related studies. New methods and techniques of research are continually being developed, and new approaches to linguistic and literary problems must always be considered by the younger generation of scholars—and not alone through books but through the direct contact of minds. Especially now, when the culture of which our literature is one aspect is being challenged, it seems important to meet and discuss the relations of literature to a rapidly changing world. With the faith that something happens when people seriously interested in their individual work get together to test out their ideas, the English Institute was founded.

Eight men, with varying degrees of belief and doubt, formed a committee to draw up plans for a hypothetical first session. When in May, 1938, a tentative plan was prepared, this self-appointed committee explained the proposal to the Executive Council of the Modern Language Association. The Council appointed this provisional committee as an M.L.A. committee to consider the possibilities of such an institute. After hearing the report from the committee at the December meeting of the same year, the Council voted that it "is sympathetic toward the proposal as outlined." Columbia University gave further encouragement to the proposal by extending an invitation to the newly founded institute to meet on its campus. This invitation was accepted, and it was arranged to hold the first

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session from August 28 to September 9, 1939. A general program was printed and sent out in May, and a special lecture program in July; and during the summer the gratifying response to these announcements increased the confidence of the committee in the success of "The Institute." When the session finally opened, sixty-three men and women found themselves embarked on a two weeks' program, which grew in interest as the members became more aware of the possibilities latent in the English Institute. At the end of the first session a questionnaire was circulated among the members to find out, among other things, whether they believed that the experiment into which they had ventured should be continued. Not a vote was cast against continuation.

Again and again at the conclusion of a conference one heard comments in the halls on the importance of the subjects treated and regrets that these discussions had not been written out so that they could be published. The evening lectures—delivered by men and women who might have been expected to reply to the committee, "We are busy. What is the English Institute?"—proved to be more attractive than the World's Fair or the New York theaters. Fortunately, several of them were available in manuscript for inclusion in a printed volume when the time might come for such an extension of the Institute's plans. The time presented itself sooner than any one dared hope. Through the efforts of Edward Hodnett, the Columbia University Press became interested in the work of the Institute and decided to undertake a yearly volume containing a substantial selection from the papers presented at each session. The result was the *English Institute Annual*, the first volume of which was awaiting the members of the Institute this last September at their second meeting. Another volume, comprised of papers from the 1940 session, is now in press.

Interest in the Institute grew during the second year, and many of those who had thought the "project would die aborning," as one unbeliever expressed it, became attentive to the reports of what had actually happened there. A young instructor told this same skeptical chief: "It is going to live." His confidence perhaps was based on the feeling, shared by many of the members of that first session, that he had himself contributed to the formulation of a purpose for such an

institute which was only partly clear when the meetings began. This purpose, if he had paused to put the thought in words, might be said to be that the Institute should provide a meeting place for scholars who know that their studies must be not only scientific but also philosophic, that they must evaluate as well as assemble information, and that this evaluation must be in a frame of references which includes the present world.

This is not the place to review the *Annual*, but a glance at its contents will give us an impression of the type of work done during the first session of the Institute. Robert E. Spiller writes in his Introduction to the volume: "We have been too narrowly concerned with 'what' and 'who' questions and too little with 'why' and 'how.'" This sentence might well be taken as a text for the work done in all the meetings, and the articles in the *Annual* might accordingly be divided into two groups: (1) those that present ideas which point the way to new approaches to literary research and (2) those that deal with techniques which are new enough to require explanation and discussion. On the side of "ideas" we have Carl Van Dorn meditating on the first problem that must confront every student, that of "Choosing a Topic for Research." After pointing out the nature of the problem with a wealth of illustrations drawn from his many years of experience as a teacher and a scholar, he concludes by comparing the student and his subject to a lover and his girl: His choice must come from his own instincts and his own experience. If, however, he "goes ahead and makes a dull marriage of convenience—that is, chooses a dull topic because it is handed to him—he deserves all the discomforts he gets." But, as a young man in order to distinguish between interesting girls and dull ones must be introduced to them, so students will wish to encounter some of the ideas which have proved enriching to others. In "The History of Thought and the History of Culture," Marjorie Nicolson explains some rewarding approaches to seventeenth-century literature and thought; and in "Literature of the Nineteenth Century and the Modern Scholar," Howard F. Lowry arouses in us the desire to explore a vast new field which lies waiting. Townsend Scudder, in "Biography in America," points out the values of biography "written with the technique of fiction" compared with "old fashioned biographies" in

a stimulating inquiry into the art of writing "the lives of particular men" in America.

On the side of techniques, two essays illustrate the efforts of the Institute to come to grips with those baffling problems of method the solution of which depends upon a pooling of information. In "The Search for English Literary Documents," James M. Osborn takes us by the hand and leads us to the bibliographical sources, to parish registers, to the most enticing tombstones, where the lives of worthies long dead may, bit by bit, be pieced together into a literary resurrection. And MacEdward Leach, in "Some Problems in Editing Middle English Manuscripts," points out to us the necessity for coming to a common understanding on the technique of editing medieval manuscripts. In dealing with both ideas and techniques the emphasis of the spectators was always on the "why" and the "how"; and if by any chance it strayed too far, the audience was likely to bring the speaker back to the underlying question.

The committee approached the planning of the program for the second English Institute with more confidence, knowing clearly that it wanted to secure speakers who were definitely experimental in ideas and techniques and who were themselves so immersed in their work that they were more interested in processes than results of a final nature. The leaders of the conferences were urged in advance not to lecture exclusively but to open up their subjects and then to throw themselves upon the mercy of the group. So successful was this method, indeed, that even the evening lectures turned into conferences this year by the insistence of the members of the Institute, who knew that the only way to get what they wanted was by cross-questioning the lecturers and by exchanging experiences with one another. We might expect the leader of a conference on "Folk Speech and Folk Culture" not only to ask for questions but to call on members of the group for impromptu accounts on some of the difficulties they had surmounted in studying dialects; but it is surprising to find that, whereas the stenographic report of the lecture on "The Scholarly Book and the Popular Review," by Ralph Thompson, fills twenty typed pages, the discussion which followed occupies an additional thirty. Some of this dialogue is worth quoting because it illustrates the quality of all the discussions.

In the course of his lecture Dr. Thompson hit on two perennial puzzlers which members of the Institute were not disposed to let drop: he said that much so-called "scholarly" writing is poor writing, and he offered as one evidence the scholar's dependence on awkward footnotes. Someone suggested that possibly ignorance of foreign languages in our graduate students is responsible for bad writing:

CARLETON BROWN: Graduate students know more about words of the foreign languages than most of the good writers of the country.

QUESTIONER: I am not too sure.

MR. BROWN: Well, they are awful fakes then.

QUESTIONER: Well, they are awful fakes.

MR. BROWN (*warming up*): I, personally, don't want to preach, but I am very glad you said that. It does seem to me a great deal of scholarly writing is inexcusably wordy, awkward, and badly done. I don't want scholarly books to appeal to the million, but I do want them to appeal and be readable to those who are supposed to read them. I find a lot of them very difficult reading, unnecessarily so; and if I were a reviewer I would say it. I have wondered time and time again just what you (*waving to the audience*) were saying. I have put it to myself in these terms. I wondered, if the educated people in the country mostly write so badly, where does all the good writing come from? (*Laughter.*) That is to say, the writing that fills the newspapers and magazines and weeklies, day by day, week by week, and month by month, is most of it not illustrious, but most of it is adequate, and most scholarly writing is inadequate. If this be treason to my profession, make the most of it.

The members of the Institute were moved by this direct attack on themselves from a veteran defender of the citadel. The discussion drifted away for a time, however, until George Sherburn, from the rear of the room, brought them back to footnotes with a start.

MR. SHERMAN (*somewhat sharply to Mr. Thompson*): You won't tolerate footnotes; but I want to know where the author got his information, how he knows such a thing is so. Of course, you don't have time to check on him, but I have to use this material again and again, and I have got to know where that stuff comes from.

MR. THOMPSON (*suavely*): I made myself very unclear if I suggested that I would not tolerate footnotes.

MR. SHERBURN (*pressing the attack*): You prefer not to have them. You certainly made yourself clear to that effect.

MR. THOMPSON: The material has to be there. I tried to say that the material can be there without being in footnote form.

MR. SHERBURN: It can't!

MR. THOMPSON: It can!

This impasse was broken by embarrassed laughter, but Mr. Sherburn was not to be lightly diverted from his point.

MR. SHERBURN: It can't possibly be there if you are giving references to documents, say, in a public record office. If you give them in sentence form, it is very cumbersome; and if you put them in one line of a footnote, they don't bother you at all. Many people—you seem to be like them (I am not lambasting you!)—have a childish prejudice against footnotes at the present time.

With a most conciliatory smile Mr. Thompson set about explaining his prejudice:

MR. THOMPSON: I will tell you where my prejudice arises. I don't want to speak of my own one book, but I am afraid I will have to. If you were to look at it—I suppose Columbia Library has a copy—you would find several of the pages are two-thirds footnotes, and the publisher set them in what amounts to pearl type. I can't read them myself. *Two-thirds footnotes, and a third text!* It happens to be a semi-reference book; so it is not so bad as it sounds. Nevertheless, it is pretty bad.

MR. SHERBURN (*scoring a point*): Sounds to me like a pretty good book.

The laughter which followed Mr. Sherburn's sally might have ended this footnote debate, but it would not die so easily. Members of the first session of the Institute had heard something of it before, when Townsend Scudder, an author of scholarly lives without footnotes, had lectured on the writing of biography. On this second occasion the argument continued back and forth for many minutes when Mr. Thompson and Mr. Brown came together as one on the question of footnotes, for both agreed that bad footnotes were a matter of bad writing, and both had previously agreed that most scholarly writing is poor writing.

MR. THOMPSON (*stoutly maintaining his ground*): It is not the objection so much to the footnote, itself, as to the unwise use of them. Too often they are a repository for material that belongs to the text somewhere, and the author is too lazy to put it into the text or has found it too late to put in the text.

MR. BROWN: I think that is very true. It is different from what Dr. Sherburn is talking about. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred there is no excuse for a long, explanatory footnote. It ought to be in the text, or in an appendix, which is another form of text. It is not a footnote at all, just a lazy man's way of doing bad writing.

All could agree that good footnotes have their place and that bad writing has not. At this point the discussion of the larger group came to an end, only to be continued in the smaller groups which

lingered in the comfortable reception room of the Faculty Club for another hour or so. Unfortunately, the stenographer could not move from group to group to catch further reverberations from this down-right appraisal of the scholar's writing by one whose job as a critic makes it necessary for him to apply literary standards to the scholar as well as to the writer.

Archibald MacLeish has recently pointed out, in a now famous article, that our generation of specialists has overemphasized the division between scholar and writer, thereby weakening the power of both scholar and writer. Alexander Pope immortalized this divorce in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* when he ridiculed the unredeemed scholar:

Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel grac'd these ribalds,
From slashing Bentley down to piddling Tibalds.

Mr. Thompson's attack on footnotes was, in fact, an attack on the undigested material with which a scholar, not graced with a single sprig of laurel, is often willing to load his writing; and this form of laziness frequently reflects the scholar's inability to evaluate his data, and his hope that somehow all of his information will eventually add up to "meaning." "The irresponsibility of the scholar," MacLeish reminds us, "is the irresponsibility of a scientist upon whose laboratory insulation he has patterned all his work. The scholar in letters has made himself as indifferent to values, as careless of significance, as bored with meaning as the chemist."

Two of the four discussion groups scheduled for the second session of the Institute seemed, on the surface, to be laboratory groups, but in practice they went beyond the level of mere technique. "Folk Speech and Folk Culture," directed by Hans Kurath, and "Dating of Books by Bibliographical Evidence," directed by James M. Osborn, derived their value from the fact that the techniques discussed approached in precision those of the scientist. But the discussion which these meetings called forth made it clear that the "values" of this seemingly technical information lay in the connections made in the minds of the listeners with work in which they themselves were engaged. Miss Norwood, who is working on a bibliography of Smollett, was not listening to talks on "The Evidence of Type and Printing-House Practice," "The Evidence of Illustration," "The Evi-

dence of Paper and Watermarks," and "The Evidence of Bindings" simply to assemble information on these subjects but rather to gather hints and suggestions as to her own bibliographical problems.

No one who attended the conferences under "Literary History" and "Literary Criticism" could have come away with the feeling that the scholar was "indifferent to values," "careless of significance," or "bored with meanings." Argument after these conferences extended through lunch hour and tea; those who arrived in the latter part of the week were aware of cross-references to earlier papers which called forth sudden and surprising responses from the group. In a sense both sessions were concerned with the functions of criticism and the debate—for discussion resolved itself into debate before the week was over—returned again and again to the question as to whether literature is to be understood in terms of form or in terms of social history. The first blaze of argument came from Norman Holmes Pearson, who opened the conference on "Literary History." "Literature is form," he declared. "The career of the artist is a continuous reaching out after form. The artist's particular process is the actualization of form. Further than that we cannot define." The interpretation of the writer is personal, and the process by which impression is converted into expression is "the literary hallmark." The first task of the critic is to measure the success of this process. Rewarding as a study of literature is to a historian interested in the mind of an age, "a critic and historian of literature ought not to confuse his role with that of sociologists."

Harry R. Warfel, in his paper on "Literary History and Social History," stated as axiomatic that "language . . . arose from social necessity" and that "aesthetic aims developed as sensitive individuals perceived the possibility of beauty in presenting socially useful information much as in our time refrigerators and fountain pens have been beautified"—axioms which the audience was by no means willing to accept. Literary critics often take upon themselves special merit, so that there has been continuous warfare between the historian and the critic though no conflict need exist. This verbal battle has resulted from the assumption that a critic is one who examines literary masterpieces only with reference to absolute aesthetic principles, freed from social relationships, always present in great works

of art. Recently vehement calls have been heard for a new writing of the history of literature based upon the untenable belief that art forms evolve from within themselves as "seeds sprout into trees." As a matter of fact, said Mr. Warfel, the "value" assigned to a work of art rests more on its content than on its conformity to aesthetic principles. There is no permanent absolute scale of values, and "history is strewn with the wrecks of 'aesthetically perfect' poems, stories, dramas, and essays." "All art is aristocratic; aesthetics, the most snobbish fringe of art, is the final refuge of persons unwilling to face social truth." It is hardly necessary to say that the hour was too brief for the argument which followed Mr. Warfel's vigorous expression of the point of view of the social critic.

Both René Wellek's paper on "Literary Movements and Periods" and Willard Thorp's on "The Problem of Greatness" touched on this recurring question of the interpretation of literature in terms of history and in terms of form. Wellek objected to the study of literature as the passive reflection of the political and social background of the author. In spite of the fact that literature is in constant interrelation with all other human activities—which do, indeed, affect literature and are in turn affected by literature—it has its own "autonomous development irreducible to any other activity or even to a sum of all these activities." Thorp described the work of the literary historian as twofold. He must perform his historical function and settle for us questions of the author's life, the bibliography of his work, the literary conventions he has accepted, and the fame he has enjoyed. But that is only half of his task—and, indeed, the easier half. He must assume the responsibility of critic and decide why one writer deserves more attention than another. In other words, he must "evaluate" as well as classify and define, even though evaluation exposes him to the risk of discovering that many of the accepted classics are, in fact, obsolete.

Cleanth Brooks, in his paper on "The Poem as Organism: Modern Critical Procedure," discarded the study of backgrounds as a means of understanding poetry. Critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he said, tended to study "poetry as statement," as a variety of prose written to convey information, and to demand clarity and logic as essential qualities of poetry. They recognized an

indefinable *je ne sais quoi* unpredictability in the poet who wrote *luckily* rather than *laboriously*, but had no critical equipment with which to deal with this quality. The Romantic critics made much of this rather mystic quality of poetry, the source of which was the poet's mind. The Romantic critics, then, shifted the attention from the poem *as such* to the poet's personality. T. S. Eliot's distinction between the personal emotion of the poet and his "art emotion" has suggested a more objective method of studying the structure of poetry or organism. This approach takes into account the plasticity of words and their organic relationship with each other and does not demand of poetry the logical unity of a scientific hypothesis but rather the imaginative writing of poetry itself. The poem is to be studied as an organism, "not in terms of its prose paraphrase or its incidental illustration of a personality or of a period."

Thus the argument moved back and forth between these two groups, ending with a convincing paper by Harry Hayden Clark, who pointed out that our interest in all but a few major works of art is, indeed, historical and that the critic must, therefore, be concerned with backgrounds; and with a brilliant paper by Allen Tate, in which he declared that the function of criticism in our time is, as in all times, "to maintain and demonstrate the special, unique, and complete knowledge which the great forms of literature afford us. And I mean quite simply *knowledge*, not historical documentation and information."

That the function of criticism should have been defined and re-defined so frequently during these conferences, by men who had unconsciously been thinking along the same lines, indicates that there is, among the scholars of this country, a definite need for the revaluation of values and a real quest for new techniques by which these values may be made available. At least a dozen members, in answering the questionnaire passed around at the second session of the English Institute, suggested that the discussion of methods of studying poetry be continued next year and that our thinking be made still more concrete by a joint attempt to read analytically a single poem chosen by the chairman. Since it is the policy of the committee to follow as closely as possible the desires of the members, such a conference group is now being planned for the third session,

which will meet at Columbia University, September 8-13, 1941. The committee wishes, in this way, to keep clearly defined the aim of the English Institute—which is to provide a time and place for scholars to meet and discuss the questions important to the “man of letters,” whom Archibald MacLeish defines as “a man of wholeness of purpose, of singleness of intention, a single intellectual champion admittedly responsible for the defense of the inherited tradition, avowedly partisan of its practise.”

HISTORICAL STUDIES AND THE HUMANITIES¹

FREDERIC R. WHITE²

Since the decline of the classics, instruction in the humanities has largely devolved upon the teacher of English. The character of that instruction is largely determined by our graduate schools. The character of the graduate schools, in turn, is largely determined by the scholarly pursuits of the leading professors of the country. And the character of these scholarly pursuits is not without a few intellectual blemishes. The sum of modern scholarship consists of thousands of informative treatises upon every aspect of literature. Divergent though these treatises are in subject matter and style, they agree in two respects: they are devoted to the propagation of information and they are unanimously free from any discussion of the worth or purpose of this information.

The perusal of these informative books, rather than direct acquaintance with humane letters at first hand, constitutes the general regimen of the graduate student. Now, the content of these works differs widely from the content of most great books. *The Republic*, *The City of God*, the *Summa theologica*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote*, *Paradise Lost*, *Faust*, or what great work you will, is in a wide sense of the word philosophical; it embodies a significant and

¹ This article is a condensation of an essay which received a Hopwood Award at Michigan for 1940. It was first read at a meeting of the English Journal Club, a graduate organization of that university.

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more or less integrated view of the world, a view which, in so far as it is more intelligent and more whole than our own, it is well for us to know. We learn, obviously, from those, living or dead, who in some significant respect know more than we. And the great writers are great exactly in this way, that they do know more than we about the beauty or humor or the sadness of mortality, about the duties, burdens, or joys of human life, about the probable scope and intent of this universe, moving somehow through something which we call space. The compendiums, on the other hand, the pabulum of the graduate student and professor, are not in any sense philosophical; they are, frankly and intentionally, historical. They are concerned neither with meanings or purposes nor with happy divinations or some sudden gleam of wisdom; they are concerned with facts—facts which can conclusively be proved to be facts by close reference to some forgotten document, or, failing that, by the testimony of some colleague who has laboriously come to the same conclusion, namely, that the fact in question is, indubitably and incontrovertibly, a fact.

From scattered hints here and there it is possible to piece together the apparent aims of these works and the general approach to literature which dominates our graduate schools. J. M. Berdan, for example, in his very full and informative discussion of *Early Tudor Poetry*, unbends enough to tell us that the roots of the luxuriant literature of the Renaissance are deep-sunk in the dark soil of the sixteenth century, and he assumes, for some reason unknown, that a knowledge of these roots will help to guide us through the forest. The assumption itself goes unquestioned; indeed, it is part of the blind faith of our age to accept the proposition that a knowledge of the genesis and development of a thing is much the same as a knowledge of the thing itself. In actual practice, to be sure, we do not assume that a sure grasp on the history of the horse aids us much in clinging to the plunging beast. It would seem that the history of the horse from Eohippus down to Seabiscuit teaches us only one thing, namely, the history of the horse, and that, to become truly intimate with equine nature, we must grow companionable with some particular horse out of the whole historical scheme. Only then can we be sure that we and the horse will rise and fall at approximately the same time. Control, then, is far different from information.

But it may be objected that the analogy is imperfect. We desire a fond acquaintance with only a small bevy of horses, but our friendship with literature is more catholic and more complicated. Horses that we might have loved dearly are dead beyond recall, but literature does somehow survive the wasting breath of time. Nor can it be denied that works of literature come to us from many a time and place and that in some ways they reflect their age. We cannot now force Horace to write English. It is too late to urge Sophocles to forget his tangled mythology, nor will Homer write about the present war. And even if we limit ourselves to literature of our own language and day, we find that modern authors will not forego the past but will draw their form and content from many lands and ages. To range a living poet in his tradition in order to appreciate him properly requires a knowledge of that tradition, and that, in turn, demands some command of languages and such historical data as clearly aid us in understanding the literature of that tradition. The question, then, in the study of humane letters, is somehow to evaluate the worth and necessity of historical information in becoming familiar with a great work of the past. While the scholars, on the one hand, claim that the more information we have the better, their adversaries, the critics, tend to dispense with all such information. Is there any possible middle ground?

If we assume for a moment that the study of great literature can make us wiser, better, and happier, we can hardly rule out arbitrarily any investigations which patently profess to make literature more understandable. And such investigations will be partly historical. Nor can we lightly legislate beforehand on what will and what will not be pertinent. Research into language, into textual difficulties, into literary forms and conventions, into the development of genres, and into the formative ideas of a period has in the past illuminated literature. No one, I fancy, would wish to destroy our grammars and dictionaries of the various tongues, our encyclopedias and compilations of mythology and bibliography, our excellent standard editions, our commentaries and biographies; for all these, properly used and properly subordinated to the end in view, namely, the understanding of great books, can be of inestimable service. We cannot, then, confidently limit the scholar's activity and say, by any

general law, thus far shalt thou go and no farther. As long as the scholar stoutly declares that he is trying rather to illuminate literature than to bury its flame under his particular bushel of chaff, we must tolerate his activities or deny our major assumption that literature is, *ipso facto*, worth understanding.

Have we then no shelter from the deluge of mediocre scholarship, so much of which is admittedly trivial and meaningless? Must our graduate schools inevitably be feeding troughs where the pearls are buried beneath the slops and the original literature is neglected for the pursuit of information? We can at least question that scholarship which makes no pretense of illuminating literature, and I fancy that much which is trivial and irrelevant is so just for this reason: that it has forgotten or denied the original purpose of scholarship in the humanities. Its results are not intended to be applicable to literature as a humane learning; its results, gathered from literary documents, are unconsciously directed toward other and obscurer ends. Yet the original purpose of literary scholarship was confessedly to illuminate literature. Historical research of the present day stems from the work of such men as the Wartons, Percy, Hurd, and Tyrwhitt, who, in the mid-eighteenth-century reaction against the unpalatable aridity of neoclassic formal criticism, began to study literature, not by an arbitrary method and a judicial set of standards based narrowly on classical literature, but by a knowledge of the times in which a particular work was written. They sought to select certain known elements of the past to illuminate the literature of the past. By and large the new method was successful. It looked at literature more closely and more catholicly. It shed new light upon familiar works and even succeeded in resurrecting neglected works deserving attention. But, as time went on, the bulk of information tended to overshadow the literature. The original purpose was perverted, then overturned, and finally abandoned. For with the advent and development of the philological method, usually blamed on the Germans, there arose a new and perplexing orientation toward literature.

The study of language for the purpose of illuminating various texts was now abandoned in favor of studying the texts to illuminate language. Works of literature were employed as linguistic docu-

ments, and philology broke away from the field of literature and pursued its own aims apart—gradually affiliating itself with anthropology, psychology, biology, and other quasi-scientific fields. What is the present purpose of studying the history of the Germanic languages is not generally discussed even in academic circles; but for our present needs it is sufficient to notice that philology inverted its original purpose—that of studying language in order to understand literature—to that of studying literary documents in order to understand language; so that the affection of a philological scholar for a particular piece of literature now depends not on its assumed capacity to make men better or wiser or happier but on the idiosyncrasies of its language and its divergences in this respect from other documents.

Other handmaidens of humane learning likewise went off and made strange marriages, and bibliography, for example, soon begot a brood new and wonderful. It became a special field and brought forth massive works crammed with all the titles which could be considered in any way related. Bibliographers now read books, not that they may derive any kind of intellectual sustenance from them, but that they may list them accurately in the catalogue which they are preparing. *Quantum mutatus: The Modern Humanities Annual*, the most fearfully complete of these catalogues, may be a thing of beauty and a joy forever. It may hold old men from the chimney corner and keep learned bibliographers chuckling in their beds until long after ten o'clock at night, but the light it sheds on any work of literature is not blinding. Nor is it intended to illuminate literature; it has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end, so that doctors of humane learning are now publicly recognized after drawing up a comprehensive list of all historical novels written about Albania between 1810 and 1840, whether they have found time to read any of these novels or not. The original purpose of bibliography has long since been lost sight of.

Biography—which was ever a somewhat spinsterish companion of humane learning—found her true calling with the advent of popular psychoanalysis. The poet's soul was bared; his poems went unread. Letters, preferably love letters, old diaries, schoolboy compositions, wills, and court orders soon became more lucrative sources for the

biographical scholar than the great and somewhat impersonal works of literature. If these were consulted, it was not so much with the design of understanding them as with the hope of squeezing from them some hitherto unknown but juicy concoction suitable for an anecdote. Biography had sometimes in the past aided in reconstructing the circumstances surrounding a great work; any such purpose was now abandoned, and one of the best known of our present eighteenth-century minds has passed his life pleasantly in studying and teaching the humane question of whether or not Swift and Stella indulged in illicit intercourse.

So, too, literary history, which was largely a compound of these various elements, has tended to break away from humane letters and move toward its own version of the new learning. Norman Foerster in *The American Scholar* has pointed out that the professors of English have drifted from literature into literary history and thence into the wide sea of universal history so that all knowledge is their province. The most complete statement of this attitude is still to be found in Professor Greenlaw's work, *The Province of Literary History*. Literature to Professor Greenlaw was a transcript of life, and was, therefore, valuable for the light it threw upon the times in which it was written. Thus, "The *Faerie Queene* remains a transcript of the life of the time and is one of the chief sources by which the historian may arrive at a just interpretation of that life." He is not really concerned with humane letters, but with universal history. We are "to study the history of civilization through literature, rather than to study authors and their works as isolated phenomena." Literary research has become, we are informed, an immense collaboration extending through space and time in which science and the humanities co-operate in writing "the whole history of the human spirit." "Nothing," we are warned, as we enter into this exciting pursuit, "nothing related to the history of civilization is beyond our province."

Merely to state Professor Greenlaw's thesis seems sufficient; to refute it, superfluous. Yet the kind of thinking which went into this defense of modern scholarship is exactly the kind of thinking which dominates the instruction in our graduate schools, the editorial policy of our learned journals, and the type of research engaged in by

both students and professors in the name of humane learning. And through these three sources it pours a muddy and thickening stream of obscurantism over instruction in our colleges and lower schools. It filters thence into many channels of our cultural life. Accordingly, the point of view that great books are transcripts of their times—that, as such, they are indistinguishable from their civilizations and that we can accomplish the ends of humane education by studying those civilizations in all their minutiae just as surely as we can from a study of the great books themselves—needs examination because of its very prevalence. Just as did philology, bibliography, and biography, so does literary history move toward a distant goal of its own. It is concerned no longer with illuminating literature in order that men may thereby become better, happier, and wiser; it employs literary documents as a means of reconstructing the past.

Let us stop and shorten skirt, as Burton says, before accepting Professor Greenlaw's invitation to plunge down this new and exciting trail. "Past civilization" is a somewhat large term with multiple referents. It embraces not only wars and politics, bridges and poems, and the sex life of the medieval peasant. It includes the soil which man tills and the seas that enfold him, the seasons in which man plants and the movements of the constellations which determine those seasons. It is affected by the ores which man digs from the earth and hence with the composition of the earth from which it comes; it is affected also by the beasts which man tames and by the carnivorous and malarial mosquito which he exterminates. Past civilization is, in short, concerned with all the reaches of time and the extent of space and with the composition and behavior of each thing therein that affects man in any way. Civilization, as a meaningful term, includes all the sciences from alchemy to zoölogy, all the instruments of man from the abacus to the zither, all the languages of man, and all the ascertainable relations among all the events, intellectual and animal, which have so far occurred in time and space. The only limit to the study of past civilization is the nature of reality.

Now, unfortunately, reality offers us no clues to its own interpretation. Human mentality is not constructed to grasp it as a whole. The incessant interplay of event with event, so intricate that

the movements of the moon are reflected in the lives of women, so subtle that imperious Caesar dead and turned to clay might stop a hole to keep the wind away, is and will forever be in its entirety beyond our comprehension. The mind of man, working actively and consciously upon small arbitrarily selected fragments of reality, is the sole source of all our knowledge of that reality. We impose upon this flux of events whose characteristics are, from a human point of view, unintelligibility and change, various concepts by which we seek to render it intelligible and stable. We confine it by chronology; we limit it by concepts of space; and we cut it up into little pieces which we carry into our laboratories or studies, and there dissect and define them—that is, impose upon them an order which, because we have constructed it, we can comprehend.

Man understands reality, then, not directly but through intellectual modes of interpretation. All of us daily acknowledge current modes of interpreting reality; I mean those institutions and traditions in terms of which we habitually think. A Babbitt, for example, thinks largely in terms of the chamber of commerce, drawing his ideas on business, politics, ethics, and literature from this one intellectual institution. Some may think in terms of more comprehensive institutions, such as the church or positivism. Professors as a group tend to draw their concepts from a vaguely defined "European tradition," slightly mottled by democratic materialism. Highly educated eclectics may draw their ethical judgments from Christianity, their political and economic views from any of the fifty varieties of Marxism, their literary axioms from Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition, their metaphysic from Platonism. There are, to be sure, men who so radically modify old institutions or traditions, such as Christ and Copernicus, that they are said to begin new traditions; but, in general, every man makes his judgments about reality in terms of one or more ascertainable institutions or traditions. Did he not, he could neither think nor communicate. Without certain modes of interpretation, then, reality is basically unintelligible; man can deal with it only in terms of order, proportion, selection.

Now to return to the kind of literary scholarship which Professor Greenlaw recommends. His avowed aim, we saw, was to reconstruct past civilization by recovering more and more of the facts or events

which constituted that civilization. The only philosophical assumption behind this "method" is quantitative: the more facts we recover, the more meaningful they become. This is generally known as the "brick" method of scholarship. Each busy little scholar throws another brick in any direction and eventually, as though drawn by Amphion's lute, all the bricks rise into order, and lo! a palace of knowledge is built *nullo manu* before our very eyes. Both the quantitative criterion and the lack of method stem from the Baconian tradition and depend upon a blind faith that if we devote ourselves assiduously to garnering facts, somehow, sometime, from these vast bins of facts will emerge a significant reconstruction of the past. But the grain we have garnered from these stores has been no sustenance for the intellect but rather an imminent starvation. Laissez faire systems, whether economic or scholarly, are in their very conception disintegrative, and the lack of order which was at first perceptible in our scholarly journals has now spread disastrously throughout all our educational a-system.

To state this theory of scholarship is to refute it. It would require omniscience himself, who first created past civilization in all its scope and extent, to reconstruct again its counterpart. Scholarship is assuming a task which is not only impossible, except to omniscience, but also basically meaningless. The closer it draws to its goal—the more successful it is in recovering past facts—the less significant the whole of these facts tend to become. A "fact" I take to mean anything which is done or which occurs in time and space. To believe that all the facts about a particular period can profitably be gathered together in such a way that they will of themselves form a comprehensible whole is to believe in a future state more fantastical than the gilded heaven of the medieval poets. For it is to demand, first, an innate vitality in recovered facts which will enable them to group themselves in order; second, a new kind of mentality in man, an ability to comprehend reality as a whole rather than through arbitrarily ordered segments. The last thirty years of scholarship suggests that our facts do not of themselves fall into order; they must wait until they are compelled into order by some powerful hypothesis. Neither, in the last thirty years, has there been any indication of the new mentality which is desiderated. We cannot, if agreement is

taken as the pragmatic test of truth, comprehend the meaning and purpose of our own civilization, though millions of "facts" lie ready at hand; how then shall we grasp those past civilizations whose facts lie buried beneath the dilapidations of time? If we had all, or even many, of the facts of a particular period fitted together, what could they teach us, how could we use them in regard to humane letters or to anything else?

Moreover, the substitution of this new scheme of humane learning—wherein literature becomes merely a collection of historical documents—for the more traditional approach to the humanities introduces an anti-intellectual attitude. It holds that all facts are of equal value. That piece of literature, therefore, which seems to be most replete with contemporary facts demands the most scholarly attention. The more clearly a work reflects its own age, the more rewarding is its study. *Abeunt studia in mores*; what the professor studies, he teaches more of. And his teaching, under the impact of this new purpose, tends to emphasize what is contemporary and ephemeral in literature at the expense of what is timeless and abiding. The critical intelligence, trained to distinguish the better from the worse, the more important from the less important, becomes subdued to what the professor works in; a gray mist of uniformity covers all works, and one poem is likely to be remembered rather because it refers to Essex' death than because it deals wisely with man. If, then, we are attempting to re-create past reality and the whole operation of the human spirit, we are not only foredoomed to failure, we are also abdicating those very values which in the past made the humanities the necessary center and integrative force of education.

However, in condemning as uncritical and unintelligible the type of research which Greenlaw and the majority of modern scholars recommend, I am not denying that history, properly pursued, is a legitimate branch of humane learning. History as practiced by the great historians consists in giving intelligible form to certain significant events of the past which are arbitrarily selected as significant and arbitrarily arranged. The facts are not left to themselves; they are grouped in sequences and hierarchically and chronologically arranged according to some theory of interpretation. Present scholars can correct and supplement Gibbon or Mommsen, but they have yet

to write better histories. History as a humane study is largely the projection into the past of our own conceptions about the present. And so it should be; otherwise it would remain sterile, isolated, unrelated to ourselves. The baptised Marxist traces the historical rise of the bourgeoisie and its relation to the proletariat; over the same period the confirmed democrat traces the origin and orderly growth of democratic institutions. Hence the necessity laid upon each generation to reinterpret the past in the light of its own problems and ideals. Neither can we write history for the future nor collect data for it—for the intelligent selection of data depends primarily upon the purpose which those data are to subserve, and we cannot foretell, we cannot inspect the entrails of future time and prophesy the purposes and problems of the coming generations.

But some protest that the facts are ordered, and these facts, they say, do illuminate literature.

Greenlaw himself, possibly feeling some difficulty in his avowed purpose, sometimes took this attitude. Earlier we quoted him on the *Faerie Queene* as a transcript of life. Now he remarks: "An understanding of the poem depends on knowledge of the times in which Spenser lived." For the naturalistic theory, or lack of theory, works two ways. First we reconstruct the past by studying literature as a collection of historical documents, then, by the light of this reconstructed past, we study literature. And, circular though this amusing game seems, there is, of course, some logic in it. Could we be sure that *Lear* was a deliberate transcript of its age, we could certainly agree with the majority of present-day scholars that knowledge of the age would increase our understanding of *Lear*. But does the stereotyped phrase "transcript of life" have any meaning? Is *Lear* the exact duplicate of the life of its times, or does it differ in some respects from it? When we are promised that a knowledge of the times will throw light upon literature, what exactly does the promise imply?

Several points need discussion here. In the first place, a jumbled collection of historical facts is by no means the same as a history of past civilization, and if we wish to study literature with a view to understanding it, few of us can afford to wait several hundred years. Scattered notes in learned journals do not constitute a Gibbon.

Scholarship, like politics, law, and business, must serve the present. Again, if the facts are ordered into a history, as of course some of them are, we are faced with the problem of stating the exact relation of a work of literature to the life of its time. No one can deny that the roots of literature are in a particular place and time; and this brings us back to the original assumption that a knowledge of the genesis and history and environment of anything is much the same as a knowledge of the thing itself. This problem has generally remained undiscussed by both critics and scholars. Scholars too often assume without question that literature and background are in a one-to-one relation; critics too often deny any relation whatsoever. *Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdin*; in shunning celibacy, he falls into marriage.

First, as to the genesis of a work of literature. Anyone who has written something more abstruse than a post card to a maiden aunt will testify how impossible it is to separate out the original threads from which the whole literary fabric was woven. But psychology aside—where the genetic critics usually leave it—we can see from Charleton Lewis' brilliant reconstruction in *The Genesis of Hamlet* that the theory of a possible genesis usually comes from a thorough understanding of the poem, and that the literature illuminates the genesis, not the genesis the literature. Lewis' account is plausible; it follows Aristotle's precept on impossible probability, but it is obviously drawn from the play, for the lost *Hamlet* of Kyd has no existence outside of Lewis' brain. We must agree, then, that a knowledge of the genesis of a work of literature is much the same as a knowledge of the work itself, not for the reasons that most scholars advance, but because our knowledge of the genesis seems to derive from our knowledge of the work of literature. If this is true, the purpose of the genetic critic is not really to establish an intelligible relation between the genesis and the work, but to re-create from the work a probable theory of genesis. The illumination of humane letters, which we have been desiderating throughout as the purpose of literary scholarship, is not adhered to.

We are still faced with the larger and perplexing question: What is the relation of literature to reality? The historical scholar quite generally assumes that literature is the "product" of its times—that

is, of reality—and does not differ in kind from it. Hence, as we have seen, we can reconstruct the reality from the literature and then understand literature by means of the reality which we have reconstructed.

Now, no sane person really confuses a narrative with reality, however much he may attempt to relate the narrative to the life of its times. The only sure connection with life that we have in literature is that at a particular time and place an author sat down and made little black marks upon a piece of paper. This is our one fact—the rest is interpretation. It is not a fact, for example, that Hamlet is a person, or that he slays Polonius, or that he dies in Denmark. In order to interpret these marks into meaningful speech and activity, we must first ally ourselves with the tradition of the English language. Next, we must ally ourselves with certain poetic and dramatic conventions in order to believe that these speeches emanate from various characters. We must draw upon other modes of interpretation to gain the illusion that these mimic persons engage in certain mimic events so that we may believe that a Hamlet who never existed slit open a Laertes whose only blood was ink. The mimic events take place not in space or time but in a framework that gives the illusion of space and time. Moreover, the mimic persons and the mimic events are given a known and unchanging relation to each other, relations of sequence, of cause and effect, of subordination, etc., which render them intelligible. The characteristics of literature, then, are intelligibility and permanence. We have tried to show that the characteristics of reality, before it is confined by concepts, are unintelligibility and change. From this flux of reality comes ordering, from this unintelligibility of reality comes intelligibility, and we see again the wisdom of Plato's words, that things are generated from their opposites. If this is true, we cannot say that literature is a transcript of life, for life is multiple, inextricably confused, and in appearance chaotic, while literature is single, arbitrarily ordered into certain known relations, and, hence, unchaotic or formed. Literature, then, is rather an interpretation or criticism of life than a transcript.

The differences between literature and life are so distinct that had it not been for centuries of misinterpretation of Aristotle it seems

doubtful that the present confusion would have arisen. Nowhere does Aristotle say that poetry is an imitation of life. He defines tragedy again and again as an imitation of an action, and in one passage—where the reading is ambiguous because of a disputed text—he couples the words “action” and “life” (*Poetics* vi. 9). Even, however, if this questionable reading is permitted to weigh against the many other instances in which tragedy is defined simply as an imitation of an action, it seems sufficiently obvious from many other statements of Aristotle’s that he did not use “mimesis” as the equivalent of “transcript”; “it’s the poet’s job to describe not reality, but such things as might well happen or really would happen as far as likelihood or necessity go” (ix. 2). Dean Richard McKeon has recently described the fifty varieties of confusion which befell the term “imitation” in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The present age seems to be bent on continuing the confusion by making no necessary distinction between an imitation of an action (which ultimately must depend upon some concept, life offering no complete actions of its own accord) and a transcript of life. The mimic events or actions of literature resemble life if, and only if, we condescend to apply the same modes of interpretation to each.

We should not say, then, that literature is either the “product” or the “transcript” of its age because, prone though we are to believe such plausible statements, they have no clearly definable meaning. They merely project into the fields of the arts the dominant sociological concepts of our present day. The basic problem, then, is: To what extent should we apply the same modes of interpretation to literature and to reality?

Modes of interpretation drawn from the sciences are hardly pertinent; we cannot weigh Shylock’s mimic pound of flesh; we cannot count the buttons on Hamlet’s tunic; we can cure with no known drug or treatment Ophelia’s madness. Concepts drawn from the sociological sciences, although they are not so obviously unfitting, have in recent years yielded results which are fully as ridiculous as the midnineteenth-century habit of enumerating the number of birds and flowers with which Shakespeare was familiar. We now have learned discussions on the psychology of Shakespeare’s characters, their station in life according to Marxian classifications, and their

economic functions. Such studies shed more light upon the attitudes of our own age than they do upon past literature. But to discuss in detail each mode of interpretation which might be applicable to literature as well as to life would delay us beyond reason or patience.³ The only conclusion which need be drawn here is that the literary historian who professes to illuminate literature by investigating the age in which it was produced should show logical as well as factual cause for his method. His is the burden of proof. For my part I take Ronald S. Crane's conclusion to be indisputable, that literary history at its best can deal only with the accidents of literature. Crane remarks:

The literary historian must restrict his characterizations of individual literary works to the traits, whatever they may be, which serve to link these works one with another in the particular causal sequences he is trying to exhibit. . . . He is less concerned with exhibiting those combinations of traits which define . . . the individuality of a work than with tracing in it the reflection of a common technique or tradition of thought.

That is, his province is the illumination not of literature but of literary history. And literary history, as we have seen, leads too often to universal history and to the reconstruction of all the past. What the final purpose of this is I do not know. I do know why scholars who privately disbelieve in the worth of such an activity continue to lend it their public support.

The study of living works of literature, whether they were written yesterday or two thousand years ago, is not a flight from, but a search after an intelligent comprehension of, the present. But the substitution of the backgrounds of those works of literature for a study of the works themselves, or an inverted zeal in defining rather what is dead in those works than what is yet alive, destroys the very purpose of education—to enable man to understand and deal with himself and his surroundings in an intelligent and humane way. It is obvious that more good books were written in the last two thousand years than have been written in the last twenty. And education in the humanities must deal with the best books. It, therefore, cannot and should not neglect the past. But great books of the past are worth reading exactly in proportion to their present, not their past,

³ Several paragraphs dealing with the results gained by employing the history-of-ideas method are omitted for reasons of space.

vitality. Dante remains a great poet, not because he gave poetic expression to Thomism, but because, in spite of the theological difficulties of his work, we can draw therefrom more wisdom, strength, and perception of beauty and order than we ourselves perhaps possess. One cannot, I fear, find this strength, beauty, or order by pawing over accumulated piles of data on the thirteenth century. The past as a whole is dead. Some parts of that past, however, can still speak to us. Let the past as a whole be buried, the living parts of the past be cherished.

It was assumed at the outset that the study of literature was a humane learning since it tended to make men happier, wiser, and better. No one who has found time to read Aristophanes or Lucian, Rabelais, Molière, or Dickens will be disposed to deny its capacity to make men laugh at themselves and at their institutions—a contribution to joy and sanity. Nor does it fail to make men wiser and better. We have sought to characterize the element common to all literature as intelligible ordering of mimic events into certain meaningful and constant relationships. To study letters wisely is to remove one's self temporarily from the flux and unintelligibility of reality and to acquire some useful percipience of this intelligibility and order. I. A. Richards defines the intellectual and emotional value of literature in just this way. He writes: "We pass as a rule from a chaotic to a better organized state by ways we know nothing about. Typically through the influences of other minds. Literature and the arts are the chief means by which those influences are diffused." We face the complexities of life more neatly if we have somehow learned how to order our concepts and how to impose upon the chaos of reality such form as makes it manageable. And training in literature is, properly pursued, training in intelligible order. Yet, is not intelligible order the very quality which our fact-intoxicated scholarship, our disintegrating schools, and our democracy most lacks? Have we not forgotten in politics and society, as well as in scholarship, that chaos and order are not the same, that the highest activity of man is the intelligent ordering of his life, his ideas, and the laws and institutions of his society? And this, if we can learn to read great literature aright, we might find. Certainly we shall not find it by abdication of the intellect and adherence to the doctrine that facts and events of themselves fall into order.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE¹

ROY IVAN JOHNSON AND HUGH McCAMMON

The function of language is communication. In developing a course designed to promote language proficiency at any level of learning, this fact should be kept constantly in mind. As the student discovers new fields of interest and expands his fund of ideas, the demands for the effective use of language multiply and become more insistent. He needs a clearer understanding of word meanings, a quicker recognition of thought relationships, the ability to explore intelligently (through reading and discussion) an increasing variety of problems. The junior college, therefore, cannot discharge its full responsibility simply by continuing formal instruction in the rudiments of grammar and theme-writing. It must analyze the communicational needs of students in terms of abilities needed in communicational situations. The course in English must become a course in the handling of ideas. This, in effect, is the goal toward which the members of the English staff at Stephens College have been working. Indicative of the direction of their thinking is the fact that they have substituted "English communications" for "English composition" in the terminology of the course. This term is used by faculty and students alike to designate the beginning English course—the basic course for all entering students.

"Communications" is a name not only for the manifold abilities necessary to clear, concise, and effective expression but also for the skills requisite to reading and listening. The depth and power of thought, the intelligence and validity of action, depend upon the development of an adequate ability to apprehend, understand, and apply new concepts. In our opinion the failure to interpret the term "communications" in this broad functional sense too often results

¹ This paper was read by Mr. McCammon before the junior college section of the N.C.T.E. in Chicago, November 22, 1940. Mr. Johnson is director of the division of skills and techniques in Stephens College, and Mr. McCammon is an instructor in composition in the same institution.

in the continuation of language-training dedicated primarily to the narrow disciplines of written composition. The first step in providing adequate training or in attaining desirable proficiency in the use of language seems to us to be a clear recognition of the four general areas—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—which comprise the total possible sphere for the interchange of ideas through language. Such a recognition will protect both student and teacher against important errors of omission.

Given this recognition of the function of language and its essential importance in all situations which involve the expression or reception of ideas, we may consider the objectives, procedures, and materials of a basic course in language-training in the junior college designed to develop desirable abilities in language use. This is perhaps best done by attempting to answer two questions: For what activities, which require the skilful use of language, should we attempt to train students? What kinds of experience involving these activities will do most to establish the desired proficiency?

The activities of communication may be classified on two bases, either classification resulting in two broad groupings. Certain activities—those which make up the areas of speaking and writing—find the individual attempting to convey meaning to others; in other situations the individual's responsibility is to understand meaning conveyed by others; he is then reader or listener. The activities of communication may also be put into two general categories on the basis of their immediacy. Certain demands are made upon the student by the scholastic and extra-curricular situations in which he is at work; other demands, not always involving the same skills, he may expect to encounter in his adult post-college experience. Adequate basic training must fit the student successfully to meet both types of demand.

Before outlining the aspects of proficiency which have been worked out as the basic objectives for the English program at Stephens College three points need stress. First, the word "basic" requires rather strict interpretation when applied to such objectives. An objective is considered basic by virtue of its application to general rather than specialized need. The proficiencies sought, the particulars of ability exercised, should be those common to a consider-

able number of the immediate and future activities of the individual; abilities needed for a specialized activity within a particular field—for example, those necessary to “artistic” oral interpretation of literature—are not the proper concern of the program of basic training. Second, no single program of basic training can contemplate completing the development of proficiency in the large number of specific factors of skill in the use of language; the first and most important contribution of basic training is to sensitize the student to the demands which he is meeting and which he may expect to meet and to introduce him to activities and standards which will, if they are sustained in every activity he undertakes, satisfactorily increase his proficiency. The task of building upon this foundation of awareness and preliminary exercise rests in some measure with the instructors who supervise and scrutinize his academic work; but it is primarily the responsibility of the student himself to be sure that he observes adequate standards of work and that he maintains, to as high a degree as possible, proficiency in those abilities in which he has received training. Finally, both student and teacher should remember that the ultimate value of proficiency in the use of language is the ability to do. Recognition, even appreciation, of clarity, correctness, and effectiveness is not enough; the goal and the measurement of basic training are performance.

AN ANALYSIS OF BASIC SKILLS AND PROVISION FOR THEIR EXERCISE

In the light of the considerations thus far outlined Stephens College has attempted by analysis to determine in some detail the components of proficiency in each of the several areas of communication. In writing skill this analysis has identified certain factors of correct usage, certain elements which may be termed “language controls,” and a group of abilities designated as functional types of written composition. Those who have developed our program have seen no wisdom in devoting the major effort and time within the course to “repair work” on the student’s mastery of fundamental grammar and acceptable usage. A diagnostic examination of those factors is given at the beginning of the course as an aid to the student in determining exactly those aspects of correct expression in which fur-

ther development is needed; a proficiency test of fundamental usage is given before the course is completed. Between the two tests the student's self-training is guided by customary checking of written work, both in the language-training course and in content courses; she may also request a certain amount of individualized remedial training from a clinician who conducts a special "English laboratory" for such assistance. The significant aspects of this part of the language-training of our students are, first, the decision not to devote major attention to direct retraining in matters which repeatedly have been thoroughly exercised in previous training, and, second, the fixing of responsibility for developing adequate proficiency squarely upon the student.

The factors called "language controls" are directly exercised in the work of the course. The student scrutinizes her own writing and that of others with attention to such aspects of the effective use of words as may be the particularized objective of the unit of work in question. In further exercises she recognizes and applies principles of effective sentence construction. She is given additional experience in the construction of the paragraph, learning to command a number of methods of development, with a view to clarifying the patterns of logical thinking, and learning also to select transitional elements with discrimination, to form the paragraph unit upon a topic sentence, and to exclude unrelated and overlapping material. Much of such study of effective construction, as well as much of the constant and cumulative evaluation of the individual's mastery, can be woven into functional types of activity such as the investigative paper, letters, directions and explanations and critical writing, which require a satisfactory application of the principles of correct form.

Consideration of the essential components of proficient spoken expression has led us to recognize a certain bracket of factors which may be termed elements of speech production, and another group of such functional types of oral composition as discussion, conversation, situational speaking, and oral reading. Students shown by diagnostic test to be notably deficient in such factors of desirable speech production as volume, pitch, rhythm, quality, and formation of vowel and consonant sounds are given remedial assistance by a speech clinician. Those with less pronounced imperfections under-

take a program of self-improvement supervised by the communications instructor. Class exercise is given in the functional activities of speech proficiency, this practice being checked by reference to the judgment of hall counselors, instructors with whom the student works, and others who may be in a position to observe the student's oral use of language.

Basic abilities in reading are of two types; proficient reading requires that the reader not only comprehend meaning but also interpret it. The units in the language-skills course devoted to training in reading comprehension are directed toward increasing the student's proficiency in general vocabulary, basic physiological efficiency in reading, comprehension of main ideas and of significant detail, and the recognition of the writer's pattern of organization. Factors of interpretation which are exercised included the ability to recognize and to formulate meanings implicit in what is read, to discern and evaluate possible applications of what a writer says, and to reorganize material comprehended into new patterns, if the reader's purpose makes such reorganization necessary or desirable. Two central objectives of most of the basic reading training might be said to be (1) establishing a recognition of the specific abilities involved in efficient reading and (2) sensitizing the student to the fact that reading proficiency increases as the individual develops the ability to discern precisely the purpose of each reading job and to choose and apply a reading method appropriate to the purpose.

A central problem in organizing language-training which will develop and refine the numerous skills we have outlined is, of course, that of locating suitable materials and formulating adequate directions for their use. In dealing with this problem our staff has come clearly to understand three things. First, no given collection of material made without reference to the program it is to implement will be satisfactory; we thus cannot solve our problem by buying the usual type of text or drillbook. Second, because the selection of material must be based upon an understanding of our own course objectives, the responsibility of that selection devolves upon the staff members. Third, because our program is yet in an experimental stage of development, the materials of this course must be con-

stantly reviewed, revised, and refined. The selection and preparation of necessary material is one principal concern of the staff for each year; all members necessarily share this fundamental responsibility. It is to be expected that, after some years of such co-operative effort and contribution, we will have brought together a body of instructional material which, with minor revision and extension, will for some years meet our needs. The same principles, incidentally, hold with almost equal force in the general problem of developing the test instruments which we must have.

This discussion of specific objectives in each of the several areas must not suggest that the actual training is a series of separated and insulated units; any one activity, any series of planned experiences in the work of the course, provides exercise in certain factors of proficiency in areas other than the one which happens at the time to be the principal focus of training. It would be unlikely, for example, that the ability to make applications of material read could be exercised without written and spoken discussion. Likewise, in exercising the skills of discussion one normally expects a certain amount of preliminary preparation which may well involve both reading and writing. And when a student analyzes the pattern of organization in a reading assignment, he is gaining experience directly applicable to structural needs in his own composition.

PROCEDURES IN DIAGNOSIS AND IN INTEGRATION

Language-training can be individualized properly only if it is preceded by a diagnosis which will reveal proficiencies already adequately established as well as needs for further growth. This fact has led us to develop a group of diagnostic instruments for each area, together with comparable forms to be used at the end of training.

In the light of the data yielded by the diagnostic tests each student may plan with his instructor a program of practice with emphasis upon the specific skills and abilities in which he most clearly needs improvement. Thus, the student assumes primary responsibility for his improvement. The test supplies the data from which the student may learn his specific needs; the instructor guides and

supplements this self-analysis. Tests given after each period of training provide not only a measurement of established proficiency but also an index of the student's growth. These tests are given well before the end of the second term so that retraining which in individual cases appears to be necessary may be arranged. Students who demonstrate adequate proficiency on these examinations and in the work of the class may elect additional individualized projects which involve the use of language skills.

Preliminary information concerning the proficiencies and needs of the individual not only furnishes a basis for planning instruction in the basic language-skills course but also contributes to the integration of basic training in content courses. This integrating function can be illustrated by describing three procedures in the Stephens language-training program. The college has organized a Reading Council which acts as an agency to co-ordinate all efforts to improve reading performance. This council calls to the attention of the faculty the availability and potential value of the test indications concerning the reading ability of each student. This information, in summary, is supplied by the communications staff to any adviser or instructor who requests it. This service makes possible a more direct attention, in instruction and guidance, to those students who are in certain particulars either much above or much below average proficiency.

A second procedure—one which is still in the process of experimental development—is also carried on under the guidance of the reading council. At frequent intervals a case of a student who is encountering unmistakable reading difficulty, yet who shows promise of responding to careful help and supervision, is selected for group study. All members of the staff who work with the student, including the reading clinician, are invited to a group conference organized and directed by a member of the Reading Council, who is in this instance a member of the staff in psychology. At this conference all data which might be relevant to the causes and solution of the student's difficulty are collected and discussed; there is then a decision as to what each member of the conference can most effectively do to help the student. The considerations and decisions are sent in written summary to every person who attended the panel. A permanent

file is opened for the case, and the staff members who participated are from time to time asked to report results in terms of their increased understanding of the student's difficulty and any consequent improvement in reading performance.

Until this procedure has been perfected and thoroughly tested, statements concerning its merits may be premature. Those who have worked most closely with it feel, however, that it does effectively disclose the causal factors in rather complex cases, that it does help in determining desirable procedure in remediation, and that it more clearly distributes responsibility for carrying out the procedure agreed upon. Experience indicates that one such conference may do much for each staff member participating, not only in helping him to deal more successfully with the particular student studied, but also in making him more aware of evidence and causes of reading difficulty and more alert to workable techniques for meeting such difficulty.

A somewhat more general practice in integration is the report, by the communications staff, of summarized diagnostic data which indicate that a particular student is notably strong or definitely weak in one or more areas of language skill. This report is sent early in the term to every faculty member who has any advisory or instructional contact with the student in which the use of language is a considerable factor. During the course of the year's work a systematic check of the student's problems and growth in the skills of each area is carried on through the co-operation of the faculty members who received the original report.

This procedure has the double value of dramatizing to the student the necessity of applying in all of her activities the skills which she is developing through basic training and of sensitizing the general faculty to their important responsibility for setting and maintaining standards for the use of English which will reinforce and supplement the basic training, both by giving it functional application and by adding to the fundamental language abilities such skills as may be particularly relevant to the work in a given field. We believe that without this close and concrete type of integration the results of basic training will necessarily be limited, both in value and in permanence.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Language-training at the junior college level must concern itself with developing in the individual adequate proficiency in each of the four broad areas of activity in which he uses language and will continue to use it. Such basic training must be guided by the results of thorough preliminary study of the individual's needs, and it should be evaluated by instruments comparable to those used in exploration.

Basic training should afford exercise of skills needed in the immediate activities of college work and essential to proficient use of language in the adult experiences of later life.

The maximum responsibilities of the basic-training program are to make clear the needs of the individual, to motivate him to seek growth, and to introduce him to types of activity which, if consciously sustained in all experience involving the use of language, will assure the development of adequate proficiency. Instructors in content courses contribute to the growth of the individual by maintaining standards and providing activity designed to consolidate and to supplement the growth initiated in direct language-training.

It is important to make one final observation. The answer to the question "What is the nature and function of training in the use of language?" is in reality very much broader than the considerations with which we have been dealing. There was a time in which such training was designed simply to fit the individual for successful personal relationships among educated men and women. To this end we taught acceptable and effective form for expression and tried to open to the student vistas of human thought which could be entered and enjoyed only by means of literary acquaintanceship. Today, wherever we turn, we meet evidence that the stakes of the game have been many times multiplied. We live in a time in which accuracy of understanding, depth and power of interpretation, and clarity and force of expression must and do mark the difference between social intelligence and social inertia, between democracy and demagoguery, even between liberty and slavery. The free and able interchange of ideas and understandings is fundamental to the survival of all that we value, is prerequisite to intelligent citizenship in a sane society. And it is to that end that we as teachers address ourselves in undertaking the development of "language powers" as a means to more effective thinking and living.

THE REFORM OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH

ANDREW J. GREEN¹

The charge that freshman English is a failure may be advanced from two distinct points of view. It may be urged either that the course is needless or that it does not fulfil its function. Now Professor Campbell,² advocating its abolition, is compelled to deny its necessity, but few colleges and universities are likely to follow the lead of Columbia in dropping the course. It must be remembered that this academic incubus, this "Frankenstein monster," was called into being and is now perpetuated by a want, a felt need, for a course designed to improve the student's effectiveness in writing. This need is almost universally recognized and is not to be eliminated by abolishing the course. Freshman English is ubiquitous, inevitable, and eternal.

The challenge that the course does not fulfil its function, however, is implicit in any charge of failure. The central issue appears to be that it is not a subject-matter course and that a rhetoric divorced from subject matter is a false rhetoric. Let us briefly consider, then, the principles of a basic rhetoric as they may be laid down in relation to freshman English.

Are they not the plain requisites, first, that the writer must know what he is talking about; second, that he must have a considered point to make; and, third, that he must write for readers? Simple predications, these, but fundamental, and fraught with consequences by which the techniques of the course should be determined. Readers willing to accept them as the principles of a basic rhetoric may insert a correction here, a qualification there, or dispute an application or the suggestions in technique; but they will, in the main, follow the principles of this discussion through to the end.

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² Oscar James Campbell, "The Failure of Freshman English," *English Journal* (Coll. Ed.), XXVIII (March, 1939), 177-85.

In "Significant Theme Content"³ I have already stressed the first principle of a basic rhetoric for the freshman course—that the student can write well only about what he knows well. In the present article I wish to stress the second principle—that a piece of writing must be thought out—mention the third in passing, and hazard a corollary from the general argument.

FIRST PRINCIPLE

A preliminary word with respect to techniques for exploiting the student's experience: the necessity for discovering more of them may be urged here. *Middletown*, for instance, may be mentioned as another classroom agent for getting the student to interpret his environment; for the same purpose a dozen other equally good books, or better, must be available. Students also often have highly personalized experiences which it is not always easy to discover. In any class there may be a student who has been building up a private chemical laboratory since he was ten years old, ready to write significantly about it; or a girl majoring in voice from whom an expository paper on breath control, interspersed with bar after bar of illustrative music, may be elicited; or a student who knows from A to Z the principles of landscaping a small bungalow, his own home. A freshman cannot be expected to have ideas until he has discovered materials for thought, and the freshman course needs more techniques for exploiting such material in the student's own experience.

SECOND PRINCIPLE

"Get the student to think." It is an old bromide, a principle to which lip service has been paid since pedagogy made its first bow. But criticism storms at freshman English, and much of it must boil down to the fact that the products of our courses do not write in a clear-headed way. To get the student to apply reflection to experience, to perceive and interpret its meaning, is the hard job and bounden duty of the instructor in rhetoric. It is a duty which, if properly fulfilled, is the highest academic service that any instructor—full professor or teaching fellow—can perform; and it is just here that freshman English, potentially, can far surpass in educa-

³ *College English*, I (May, 1940), 691-99.

tional value any subject-matter course which, while filling the student with information, fails to require of him the application of reflection to data. It is just here that freshman English can do work of the highest college and university caliber and take a position of dignity in the academic world.

"Give us students," cry the sciences and the departments of political science and of economics, "who grasp essential issues and see the reasons for things. It is nothing to stumble on an answer in the dark. We want students who can weigh and balance, cut through to essences, and arrive at answers. We can even forgive the wrong answers, knowing well that the analytical faculty will in time correct its own mistakes. But right or wrong, answers unsupported by power of analysis are worthless."

To produce such minds, as Huxley pointed out long ago, is the object of a liberal education; and freshman English, among other courses, must bear its share of the labor. That share is the more arduous because rarely before, up to his admission to freshman English, has the student been required to think at all. The crying need of the course is for more techniques to develop in the student this power of analytical thought; and the present article, in suggesting such techniques, can fell no trees, can hope at best only to clear away a little of the brush. But it can point out that themes with head work in them are not, in general, produced by assigning a subject, "due Friday," or even a problem ("Describe a landscape as it appears from the top of a tower or hill"). They can be produced only by requiring the expenditure of thought before the theme is written. One procedure which compels such thinking is the requirement of an analytical outline of the theme the student proposes to write, and another is the critical conference on the outline.

TECHNIQUES TOWARD CEREBRATION

What is an analytical outline? It does not arrange by topics but organizes by ideas. It endeavors to show the pattern of ideas by which a paper is to be developed. It requires that each main point and each subpoint be presented in a complete sentence possessing a definitive predicate. It controls—this is indispensable—the whole pattern by means of a thesis sentence expressing the idea which it

is the purpose of the paper to set forth. The analytical outline, in short, expresses in the thesis sentence the purpose and basic idea of the paper, and in the rest of the outline the final pattern of thought by which the thesis was arrived at and by which it is to be developed.

To require the student to plan his theme by means of a reasonably detailed analytical outline before he writes it is to insist upon the interpretation of material, the imposition of the mind upon experience in an endeavor to find its meaning. In the process of the analysis of his data, he must sort, classify, arrange, sift, winnow. He must strike a hypothesis, correct errors, reclassify his data, strike another hypothesis. Over and over again, if he is to do well, he must repeat this process: he should not rest until he has found a final principle by which things are ordered. Whether the analysis is slow or rapid, whether it is forwarded by painstaking, cool, and patient lucubration or by an excited intensity of application, its object is the discovery of a principle—of *the* principle—by which its data are to be interpreted. Soon or late the right principle, called "thesis," is discovered; and then, and not until then, is the student entitled to speak and to be heard with respect.

The thesis must be original. In the freshman course there is no room for what is second hand. It is not a pawnbroker's shop. What business has the freshman writer, or any writer, saying less well "in his own words" what someone else has already said better? Such writing is almost functionless. The very act of writing presumes an individual possession, a novelty either of idea or of stress, a special competence to speak on a subject. His point, therefore, must be the distinctive property either of the writer himself or of a small group for which he can authoritatively speak. It need not differ greatly, but it must differ distinctly, if only by a slight shift in emphasis, from the contribution of someone else. For it is only the clear perception that he has a point of his own to make that justifies his writing at all. To require that his paper be original, not merely in style but in fundamental point, is to require the student to think.

The thesis must be significant. Its significance may be humble, but it must be genuine. A basic rhetoric demands that one have something worth saying or keep silent. Amiable inanities have no place in the freshman course. Although some slight concession, per-

haps, may be made to the literary artist in trivialities, we may affirm that merely to amuse is not the object of a basic rhetoric. No more can it be, in a serious college course in rhetoric, the object of a freshman theme. The student has a sense of humor? Then let it serve a purpose! To do something to a reader, to impress something on him, or to convince him, though not necessarily by formal argument: this must be kept clearly before the student as his sole justification for writing. The freshman course may be one in which the student, perforce, must play at writing; but if he does not play in dead earnest, he violates the first principle of sport and of rhetoric and should not be required to play at all. To find a significant thesis is not easy: to require the student to do so is to require him to think.

The thesis must be true. Here some one will ask the insistent question of Pilate, and we hasten to say that the thesis must be convincing. Truth, though possessed of great power, is subtle and elusive; yet analysis must seek it. The student must try hypothesis after hypothesis, answer after answer, and solution after solution. He will discover that the one right answer is not the first, nor perhaps the second or the sixth, but always, whether it be tenth or third in order of attempt, the last one. Not until the last answer has been reached is the job of analysis done. We cannot hope, of course, that every student in the class will arrive at the last answer. We need not, however, accept the first answer or any answer until it begins to acquire something of an air of rightness. The writer must aim at truth, and the instructor may at least demand reasonable progress in that direction.

A qualification is necessary here. The thesis must not be an obvious or a generally recognized truth, but one which requires development to bring out its full import. If the truth is generally recognized—if the thesis presents no new emphasis, no novel shade of meaning, no fresh and significant application—a paper “developing” it must necessarily be without basic function. That the world is round—or that treatment of cancer by radium, when possible, is preferable to surgery—has already been established and does not need to be explained again. A basic and collegiate rhetoric insists that a paper must have a real function, that it must be more than

an exercise in handwriting, sentence and paragraph structure, and the tiresome repetition of stale material. Obviously, to require that the thesis be true is to require the student to think.

The thesis must be definitive. Indeed, it can be neither original nor significant if it possesses the defect of vagueness or of breadth. Analysis, like Nature, abhors a vacuum. Cloudiness of purpose is want of purpose; and if an idea cannot be made definitive, in what can the student's individual contribution lie?

So important is this matter of the definition of the thesis that it requires to be treated at some length. First, to dispense with some preliminary considerations. The thesis must be single, concise, and specific. It must be single, not dual or plural, for who can set foot in Boston and in New York at the same time? It must be reasonably concise. Although a dependent construction or two may be included for the forwarding of a relationship or for definition, the thesis must not become so cluttered as to obscure the essential point. And it must be specific. The omnibus word and the vague word, especially when the predication rests heavily upon them, are to be avoided. "Important," "great effect," "influence," and similar words lack form and definition.

VAGUE: "The depression had a great effect on Barton Hills."

THESIS: "The cultural shift which the depression has wrought in Barton Hills is symbolized by the increasing intrusion of the bungalows of professors among the exclusive estates."

The organizing force of a paper is weakened in the degree that the principle by which it is organized is broad or vague. As the organization is loosened, it tends to become mere arrangement. The two are frequently confused, but organization admits of no kinship with the impostor. Any child can arrange red, white, and blue blocks; any high-school student can classify the members of the organic world as plants, birds, fish, animals, and men; and any college student can enumerate the benefits of athletics as (a) physical, (b) social, and (c) mental. Yet in not one of these illustrations does the very lucid arrangement have any real meaning. Organization orders its parts by a principle, by an idea; designs a flag; discovers bilateral symmetry in leaf, herring, and John Doe; and finds that to break down racial prejudices is a function of the city playfield.

There are two types of themes in which arrangement frequently masks itself as organization. The first we may call the "descriptive theme," of which the fatal weakness is its lack of focus or direction. It has for its purpose not to impress the reader but only to inform him.

1. Civic agencies greatly influence the social standards of living in Sault Ste Marie. [The student is striving to find a point but cannot conceive his purpose clearly. The paper will almost certainly be descriptive.]
2. The building of a new church involves many financial and social problems.

These papers substitute topic for idea, information for interpretation, arrangement for organization, general description for point, facts for truth. They canvass the subject, without exhausting it, on broad lines. They have no purpose except to describe and inform. In the great world there is a need for encyclopedic treatment of subject matter. But encyclopedic treatment presumes an authoritative command of a broad subject greater than that to which any college student can possibly pretend and an indifference to the reader except as he seeks information. Student writing of this type is therefore based on false premises. The investigative theme, at least, even though the student may have rearranged and rewritten the material, cannot in fundamental essence be more than a second-hand transcript of his sources. The non-investigative theme, if the information possesses novelty, is somewhat better off, but it is subject to the same inadequacy of structural intelligence. Although we must sometimes accept the descriptive paper (grades as high as "B"), it should be with full recognition that it has been an exercise only in the lower levels of the mind.

The paper of broad debate, always descriptive, though sometimes deceptively lucid in its appearance of analysis, is subject to the same criticism of lack of definition. "Our navy should be enlarged." This looks like point but is not. The student is trying to settle the problems of a two-ocean navy, of the superiority of battleships over airplanes, of America's foreign policy, and a hundred kindred issues (few of which he will even mention) in a paper of one or two thousand words. Clear-headedness does not wrestle blindly with a hydra but sinks its sword in a vital spot.

THESIS: The diameter of the bore of a naval gun determines its range and the amount of damage it can inflict on an enemy.

An equally fundamental objection to broad debate is that it subordinates truth to mere rhetoric, whereas a basic rhetoric subordinates mere rhetoric to truth. Basic rhetoric does not consist in an attempt to win "debatable" argument. Its spirit is not the spirit of conquest but the pursuit of definitive truth. Whenever opposition or further information or further analysis advances a sound argument against its thesis, it modifies or corrects its thesis. Because it constantly strives toward the elimination of error, it cannot long remain on debatable ground. It seeks the "last" answer, about which there can be no debate. The spirit of free inquiry leads to the establishment of an often seemingly humble, but usually critical, truth. Analysis, let us repeat, does not cease until conviction has been reached.

Definition, then, is the hardest of all requisites to attain. It is not easy to think. To promote thought-out writing is nevertheless the fundamental duty of the instructor in a serious college rhetoric, and insistence upon definition of point and purpose is one of the best means of fulfilling it.

A second technique for producing thoughtful analysis of one's subject in advance of actual composition is merely an aspect of the discipline of the outline. The student's plan for his paper should be discussed in a friendly but critical conference.

The first time an average student hands in an analytical outline, it is very likely to be weak. Never before has he been required to write by other than a vague associational method. Now he must write to a point of his own; more, he must be able to set forth in a definitive way the precise purpose of every step in the development of his thesis. He must not only think his subject out, but his solution must have a convincing rightness about it. This is the calculus of rhetoric, and the student is sure at first to have difficulty with his problem.

It is idle to write comments in the margins of analytical outlines. "Your thesis is broad." "This introductory 'background' material does not advance your thesis." "Main point III is a repetition of the thesis. If in III you intend to develop the thesis, what was the function of points I and II?" The instructor is lucky if the student regards such written comments as more than decorative marginalia.

Get him in conference and subject him to friendly criticism. He has not thought hard enough, has not penetrated deeply enough into his material, has not completed, in short, the work of analysis. You show him what is wrong and give him all the constructive aid you can. Often he sadly watches his outline, body and soul, disappear before his eyes. "You see that your solution is faulty and that you do not really have a defensible point after all. Nearly all the other students are having the same experience. Next time you will do better. Bring a revised outline to conference next week. Polish up that thesis and see that your main points really forward its development. Your theme itself will not be due until a week from Wednesday. Now go and do your outline all over."

Under this discipline the shallowness that has been the besetting sin of the average freshman theme will, for the majority of students—say three-fifths or more—quickly disappear. After the first time, one conference on the analytical outline for a paper (though not infrequently a revised outline may be called for) will usually suffice. The instructor must often content himself, it is true, with something less than the "last" answer; but he need not content himself with the idle prejudices, hasty generalizations, superficial skimming, and confused objectives which the first or second answers usually represent. From half of the students he can get final papers with original theses at least tenable and interesting; from a quarter he can get papers with original theses of high probability; and from a smaller fraction he can get papers in which the student has solved his problem, has arrived at the "last" answer, that is, the establishment of an original point convincing to the reader. For the student has been required to think.

THIRD PRINCIPLE

Upon the final principle of a basic rhetoric, the problem of presenting the purposive paper, of writing for readers, it is unnecessary to dwell at much length. Here, too, new techniques may be sought and old ones adapted, but it seems probable that the course is least deficient in techniques for advancing this end. The point may be stressed, however, that rhetoric is "mere" rhetoric, idle and false, only when it is conceived as something apart from subject matter,

when it is divorced from basic rhetoric. When a writer has an original idea, derived from sufficient analysis of sufficient data, requiring development to bring out its full import, of interest and significant value to readers, and, above all, held with clarity and definition and conviction of truth, he is entitled to use every conceivable device of rhetoric which will help put his idea over. More (since he is convinced of truth), it is his duty to seek for, to know, and to use these devices. He will mold men, not to selfish purposes, but to truth. There is no sophistry here. Clear aim vitalizes the problems of grammar, punctuation, and syntax, of sentence and paragraph, of coherence and emphasis, of diction, of euphony, and of dialogue, and endows the dead dogmas of an academic rhetoric with dynamic force. Rhetoric is mere rhetoric no more when it is devoted to the forwarding of an honest, earnest, and clear-sighted purpose, but is, instead, the quick and eager servant of a mighty master.

COROLLARY

If the principles presented here be accepted as fundamental, the principles which justify any and all writing not frivolous or encyclopedic in intent, it is clear that they are the principles upon which the reform of freshman English must be conducted. Criticism of the course is to be answered only by effective instruction in a basic rhetoric. Perhaps it is hazardous to hint that the course should be almost wholly given over, throughout the year, to monthly papers of a thousand words or more, supported by preliminary techniques to promote quality. To give to the freshman course an intellectual level, new texts, new books of reading, and new techniques, in addition to the adaptation of older techniques, are needed. Additional functions which the course has assumed must be fitted into the program or discarded. If freshman English fails, it fails, and if it succeeds, it succeeds, in the degree that it does or does not elicit from students purposeful papers, in whatever form of discourse, founded in sufficient data, and designed to communicate effectively, from the writer to the reader, a distinctive idea, significant, definitive, and true.

GOOD COLLEGE READING

NEAL CROSS¹

Ever since the work of C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards became well known in this country various educators have been concerned with the question of whether the author's meaning, as insisted upon by Ogden and Richards, or the reader's meaning, influenced and twisted as it is by his own background, should be of most importance in reading. The whole of the context theory of meaning is an attempt to help the reader get at the author's meaning. On the other hand, some educators feel that the important outcome of reading is the application of meaning to the reader's personal life and that it is not so necessary to find out exactly what the author meant as it is to take the meaning which the individual finds upon the page and apply it to his own problems. For example, in *Language and General Education*, expressing the point of view of Richards, we find a lengthy discussion of the meaning of the first part of the Declaration of Independence, showing the similarity between it and a document of the Virginia House of Burgesses and showing also the Continental influences which brought about this statement. These are all attempts to discover, through a study of context, exactly what the writers of the Declaration meant. This represents the thinking of one of these groups. On the other hand, the other group would skip this careful study of context and ask what these words mean in the present situation. The Richards group would ask, "What, exactly, did the author mean?" The second group, "What meaning do we find?"

Such is the question which lies between these two schools of interpretation. In the heat of discussion many have come to regard these as alternative points of view with no middle ground. It is the purpose of this brief article to give one example of good reading on the part of a freshman college class at the Menlo School and Junior College which will demonstrate the relative position of these two types of interpretation in the total reading process.

¹ Member of department of English, Colorado State College of Education; formerly of Menlo (Calif.) School and Junior College.

The class was given the sentence from Emerson's *Self Reliance*: "The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray." The question was "What does this sentence mean?"

Considerable discussion followed. Some students were off on the tangent of the actual physical eye. Others took the eye as a figure of speech referring to the individual. Finally, one student suggested that perhaps the key to the meaning lay in the words "should" and "might." It was worked out, then, that the word "should," used in the third person singular, indicated will rather than simple futurity. The word "might," as used here, indicated potentiality rather than simple assertion. With these leads the class developed this paraphrase of the original sentence: "The plan for the universe is made. Each individual has a unique contribution to make in the fulfilment of that plan. He may or may not make that contribution."

When this was complete one student burst forth, "Why, that's the whole basis of democracy. If we believe that, then every person is created equal, for each one of us has something to do, and it's just as important for one person to do his bit as for another person to do his." This possibility was explored with considerable interest.

Another student advanced the idea that this was one answer to the question of free will. Emerson, he pointed out, believed that we have free will within a general framework. This idea was then explored by the class, as were several others which were suggested by students. So it went. It was only when these applications of the ideas of the sentence ran dry that we were able to tell what the sentence meant.

It may be that this example of good reading on the freshman college level may point toward an answer to the question which was posed at the beginning of this article. In the first place, it was necessary to make a very careful interpretation, aimed at getting the author's meaning. Then it was possible to develop personal applications of that meaning in bringing light on all sorts of problems of immediate interest. It must be borne in mind that such reading as this is only practicable when the matter itself is worthy of such effort. This sentence is; much writing is not. But with such reading material this constitutes good reading on the part of college freshmen.

CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

Is "consensus of opinion" a redundancy?

F. S.

Perhaps, strictly speaking, the phrase is redundant, though *consensus* is used to mean "agreement" or "harmony" in other matters than opinion (among the organs of the body, for instance), so that the word alone would not necessarily refer to ideas. At any rate, usage of the whole phrase is so general that it would take precedence of any mere logical or historical objection. Webster's *Second International* has it about right: "The expression *consensus of opinion*, although objected to by some, is now generally accepted as in good use." I doubt if many object to it.

Is it correct to say "an hotel" or "an historical event"?

R. N.

The use of *an* with these words is a survival from the time when the *h* was not sounded. Now *an hotel* would be very rarely spoken or written. *An historical event* occurs typically in fairly formal contexts and would be more often found as a conscious or unconscious archaism. Both words are better used with *a*, like words beginning with other consonant sounds.

Please discuss the existing evidence of the acceptability of the word "well" in the sentence "He looks well in that coat." Is this usage regarded as a hyperurbanism, or would it be considered standard English?

C. T. C.

The point, I suppose, is *good* versus *well*. Both would be common, with *well* regarded as the more reputable, nearer "standard," though *good* would be widely heard. The only evidence that I can produce is from casual observation, which is that more people say *looks good* than would admit it, that most would at various times use both, but that among people of some education *well* would be somewhat more common. There may be some regional difference here, with *well* more common in the East. There has never been such a spread between the two words as between *bad* and the quite formal *ill*.

Please indicate the correct verb form in the following sentences:

1. Bread and jam — by the children (to like).
2. There — his hat and coat (to be).
3. A puncture and blowout — responsible (to be).

A HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASS

The verbs in such sentences follow the meaning, depending on whether the compound subject refers to a single item or to two separate ones. "Bread and jam *is liked* by the children," because the two foods are taken together, forming one delicacy. (But: "Candy and jam *are liked* by the children.") Strictly, the second would be "There *are* his hat and coat"; but most of us, regarding the two objects as a single bit of evidence, would say, "There's his hat and coat," and would be quite right for ordinary speech. The third would depend on what really happened. If the puncture and blowout was one mishap, say "*was* responsible"; if they occurred separately, say "*were* responsible."

S. T. P.

Is the "n" pronounced in "columnist"?

So long as *columnist* was in rather restricted use, the formal pronunciation at least was *col' um nist*, and this is the pronunciation generally recorded in the dictionaries. When the word became common in its newspaper sense, the pronunciation was simplified to *col' um ist* and is so recorded in the *Standard Dictionary* and in Webster as "used by some." (This is disregarding the possibility of the once humorous *col' yum ist* becoming regular usage in this meaning.) Since *fifth columnist* has become a word of mass use (and overuse), the simpler pronunciation has become general. Most radio speakers use it. The problem is just one small by-product of an attitude toward spelling in which vestigial never sounded letters are highly regarded.

P. G. PERRIN

NEWS AND NOTES

N.C.T.E. COLLEGE MEETING

The College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English for a second time held a meeting in connection with the convention of the Modern Language Association. In Boston this took the form of a luncheon on Saturday afternoon at the University Club, with about sixty-five in attendance in spite of the fact that it had to be outside the convention hotel.

Warner G. Rice, chairman of the College Section, introduced as the first speaker his own department chairman, Louis I. Bredvold, of the University of Michigan. Professor Bredvold began by saying that the announced topic, "Graduate Instruction in the Preparation of College Teachers of English," assumes the parallelism of the Ph.D. study and the preparation of teachers, whereas these two things should be identical. More attention to the expectation of teaching might improve scholarship, as more scholarship would certainly improve teaching. Professor Bredvold said that, serving in the last three years as a member of the editorial board of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, he had had a chance to see a fair sample of the output of scholarship. The general criticism of it is that it is not finished, not thoroughly worked out, not well written. Too often these papers are likely to be compilations of data without the exercise of the intelligence which would bring out the significance of the data. Such papers might be expected from men who, as graduate students in seminars, recited undigested notes while watching the instructor out of the corner of the eye and using rising inflections at the ends of all sentences. If, in the seminar, the students reporting might be forbidden to look at the instructor and required to teach their material to their fellow-students, not only the seminars but also the Modern Language Association papers and the future teaching of these students would be improved. Further, the students who intend to teach in college should have part-time teaching under supervision during the latter part of their graduate study—a sort of internship.

The chairman then introduced Professor John Livingston Lowes of Harvard, who said that in the seven years of his graduate study—really seven years of graduate study excluding undergraduate work—only two

men stood out as good teachers, and they were the best research men. Research must be adventure and must send the researchers back to their own teaching touched with this spirit. Professor Lowes closed with a tribute to George Lyman Kittredge and asked all the audience to rise to that tribute.

The third speaker was Professor H. L. Creek, head of the English department in Purdue University, introduced as the spokesman for the professional schools, especially for the schools of engineering. "Four years ago," said Professor Creek, "the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education appointed a committee to study the problem of English instruction for engineers." They discovered, of course, wide and strong disagreement, but through all this it was evident that the kind of man who teaches is more important than the details of his training. Some favored the engineer teaching English, but such men seemed to fail in teaching both literature and composition. The commission, whose report (see *College English*, II, 291, 300) Professor Creek was discussing, does not feel that the teaching of literature in engineering colleges is hopeless. These technical colleges want first-rate men for their English departments and are more willing to pay than is usually supposed. They want at most only an occasional engineer to teach technical reports. Some of these institutions avoid the graduate schools and pick bright young men from the arts colleges and train them on the job. In general, the qualifications needed for such work are (1) ability and desire to write, (2) scholarly knowledge of the language of today, (3) knowledge of great books in more than one language and ability to make young men love these books, (4) some knowledge of society, industry, science, technology—if possible.

Bernard De Voto, free-lance critic, came next, speaking, as he smilingly said, of the irresponsibles. Our profession, he said, is beating its breast in confusion and bewilderment, which is accentuated by world-confusion. Teachers of English, as usual, don't know quite what to do, and others who do—he really meant who think they do—are winning. The man with a positive proposal, even though it is foolish, has a better chance of getting money from the public than the one who hesitates and qualifies. The English departments, Mr. De Voto thinks, are lacking in confidence and lacking in fixity. Current literature is the profession's most available instrument to arouse interest in culture. The schools and colleges always lag about four years behind the current literary fashion, being now interested in the literature of the middle of 1936. The professors of English distrust and feel some contempt for the writers of contemporary literature; but these feelings are overcome by headlines and reviews, so that

they accept such material, but accept it late. On the other hand, the professors of English should realize that the old days of ease in an expanding economy are gone forever. (It is surprising that none of them has answered MacLeish's singularly vulnerable thesis.) This divided attitude toward writers leads students to adopt similar half-hearted opinions. Unless the teachers of the humanities organize and defend themselves, they will be trodden down by the barbarians.

The program concluded with a talk by Dr. Ernest V. Hollis, the college staff worker for the National Commission on Teacher Education, who spoke out of considerable firsthand knowledge of college departments of English over the country. Reform, Dr. Hollis is convinced, must come from the departments themselves. Some of the prestige-carrying departments are slipping because they are not reorganizing to meet changed demands of the present world. He asserted that two-thirds of the product of the graduate school will go to teach in junior colleges and other colleges, where the general education movement is being strongly felt, and that of the remainder many will go to teach in comparatively small arts colleges, many of whose graduates will become high-school teachers and therefore need to be prepared to participate in the procedures of general education. Students with such destination may need training somewhat different from that which has been traditional. Dr. Hollis didn't specify at all what these differences might be, feeling that the departments themselves can do that better than he. He offered to answer questions and confer with people who thought that ideas gained from his observations might be useful to them; and after the meeting adjourned a group of a dozen gathered about him and continued in informal conference for a considerable time.

C. C. Fries, as chairman of the nominating committee, proposed the re-election of Professor Rice as chairman and the naming of G. B. Parks, Queen's College, and Charles C. Walcutt, University of Oklahoma, as members of the steering committee of the section for the next three years.

A nominating committee for next year was elected: E. C. Hassold, University of Louisville; H. L. Creek, Purdue University; and W. H. Rogers, Western Reserve University. The chairman was directed to appoint a committee to study present inquiries into the training of teachers and to report to the section their significance for college teachers of English.

The curriculum of St. Johns College and the educational theories of its leaders are subjected to a critical analysis by W. C. Barrett in "Read-

ing and the Liberal Arts," in the winter issue of the *Kenyon Review*. Contrary to the publicity that the St. Johns system is a return to discipline, the danger of the program lies in its emphasis upon a scattering of the "best books." The end is vaguely defined as liberal education for democracy, but what positive convictions are behind the curriculum? Of the two intellectual leaders, Mr. Scott Buchanan, as his writings reveal, has developed talent in dialectic but no settled convictions. Mr. Adler, reputed to be a Thomist, proves on the analysis of his writings to be an eclectic whose Thomism is founded rather upon the literary mind of M. Maritain than upon the tenacious and hard mind of St. Thomas.

The college course recommended by Mr. Hutchins and the others represents a turning-away from things modern and is suited at present only to the graduates of private secondary schools. Certainly the public schools need reform, but at any rate the main problem in college is to bring the students as quickly as possible, without sacrificing the rest of their education, up to the highest contemporary level of a particular field. By the St. Johns method, do not the students, isolating the culture of the West in a few classics, really strive to learn a hypothetical art of reading *in vacuo*? They study Hegel's *Logic*, a difficult book now of value only to antiquarians. In great literature they study no "complete works" and so experience no direct observation of the literary art developing and maturing in a particular writer. Euclid, who sums up a tradition, may be valuable, but Descartes's *Geometry* or Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* only mark the origins rather than the ends of mathematical developments. At St. Johns, then, the uncritical acceptance of textbooks has been displaced by a rejection of textbooks which is similarly uncritical. The St. Johns effort is still in an experimental stage in the sense that the whole program ought to be the subject of continuous and scrupulous modification.

That T. S. Eliot's intellectualism and his reactionary position are alike an illusion is the argument of Yvor Winters in "T. S. Eliot: The Illusion of Reaction," in the *Kenyon Review* for winter. First, Eliot is contradictory on the relation of the work of art to the artist's experience and judgment. On occasion he speaks of the artist as working like a catalyst, unconscious of his ends, between his experience and his art; again he ascribes the deficiency of certain poets to their lack of a firm grasp of human values. Second, Eliot sometimes agrees that the feeling expressed by a work of art should be motivated by the artist's comprehension of his subject, which is drawn from human experience; but in the main he pre-

fers to assume the artist's emotion as the initial motivation. That is, he reasons that the artist constructs a set of objects, a chain of events, as the formula of a particular emotion; and this is the theory of Ezra Pound or, in an earlier form, of Poe. In accord with this view Eliot reasons, for example in his criticism on Dante and Shakespeare, that, although the quality of a writer's thought is enforced upon him by this time, it is irrelevant to the quality of his work. Dante *qua* Dante is different from Dante *qua* poet. The upshot of this tendency in Eliot is a kind of mystical determinism, which has seldom been stated with such naïve emphasis except by Emerson himself, and also the belief that, since poetic quality is independent of the thought, a poem may be good whether the intellectual content is good, bad, or fraudulent. It is true that one may appreciate poetry without fully entertaining the beliefs which it expresses but only, as Eliot does not make clear, if the thought of the poem is in some sense acceptable, as the non-Christian might easily share a wide community of belief with Dante.

Finally, Eliot is confused about the poets' relation to tradition—a subject which has fascinated him from the beginning. He says that the most mature poet, in his most individual poetry, asserts the immortality of his ancestors, but he praises similarly Pound and Valéry. Valéry, who has mastered traditional method, is a living and beautifully functioning mind; Pound is a rich but disordered memory. When Eliot says that he thinks of the literature of a single country as an organic whole and of the true artists of any one time as an unconscious community, his remarks have an extreme deterministic flavor. What organic whole encompasses Pound and Valéry, Eliot and Robinson? It is primarily Eliot and his disciples, not the rest of us, who demand that poetry shall be representative of its age; and they appear to have decided consciously that the unconscious tendency of the age is to produce poetry in the manner of Pound and Eliot.

The principal idea expressed by Richard M. Gummere in "The Scholar's Dilemma" (*American Scholar*, winter)—a comprehensive and concise review of present educational tendencies—is that we must preserve a balance of the humane and the vocational studies. Elementary education is both interesting and sound; scholars in the graduate and professional schools are on the way to an effective trinity of machine, mind, and spirit. Secondary education, however, with its emphasis on a "life-expressive curriculum," reveals no such ordered progress; and in this area, which extends into the junior college years, the pragmatic and vocational studies

are in excess. The American scholar would encourage the widest and most vocational latitude of choices to the noncollege student, to the young farmer and artisan, but he would insist that every student capable of profiting from college should be well grounded in the prerequisite knowledge of physics, mathematics, or Latin. The precollege student, on the other hand, is entitled to his hobby fringe of music or shopwork or magazine writing. Finally, the traditional subjects need to be vitalized, to be correlated with the world of action. There is no better time than now to build up a procedure which will avoid both unsatisfactory extremes—of atrophied tradition and of mere mechanistic immediacy.

This is a cycle of depression in poetry as well as in economics. Poets are silent today, perhaps because they are busy thinking, re-examining their convictions about love, nature, religion, patriotism, war and peace, justice, wealth, and poverty. It is not surprising, Mr. John Erskine thinks, for with every great liberation and growth of the human spirit there is at first a silence among the poets ("When Will the Poets Speak?" in the *American Scholar* for winter). As a result of their re-examination, what will the poets say about love? What interpretations of nature and religion will satisfy us? Rousseau's view that we can rediscover in nature perfection? Or Wordsworth's, as modified by Emerson, that nature, though ruthless and indifferent, is a divine discipline? Or the Darwinian theory of nature as grim necessity? All themes of poetry are confused today by the same spirit of division and debate. Patriotism involves the questions of war and peace. War has proved to be a hideous delusion, but pacifism has been mainly a negative ideal, too seldom a prolonged and concerted effort to end the rivalries which bring on the fight. Having come to the end of an epoch, the world is fitting itself out with a new philosophy of history, and the poet can hardly speak to great issues until he knows the mind of his audience.

Our times challenge particularly the poet who can sing not only in youth but in age, after the wounds of experience. When the revival of poetry comes, the signs of it will be a more comprehensive philosophy and a more honest acceptance of life than the contemporary poets achieve. The individual singer will express all of himself, like Virgil, like Whitman. And the new poets will address all their audience, perhaps through a new medium—the radio—as well as in books. If we seize the opportunity which radio offers—a living audience more numerous than the troubadours ever dreamed of—poetry can once again come out of the boudoir and the study and match itself against the world.

The radical changes in poetic trends of the past generation are explainable with reference to the general upheaval in our world (Babette Deutsch, "Understanding Poetry," in the winter number of the *American Scholar*). Poets who worked Masefield's vein, speaking of common things in the common tongue, were followed by those who were erudite, who strove to suggest rather than state, and in a more delicate music, their obscure private feelings. The psychological dislocation of the first World War influenced poetry to deal with the jazzed rhythms of urban life, with dreams and the unconscious. Such ambiguity as the Sitwells, Eliots, and Pounds deliberately cultivated may now be on its way out; but the younger poets are still allusive, suggestive, outrageous, and obscure. Dr. Johnson, however, found Milton so. The obscurity of the young poets, which is caused by their desire to represent the complexity of experience and also by their writing to a select audience, is not insurmountable. Like the poems of Hopkins, the new poetry explodes rather than yields at first sight its meaning. Furthermore, it presents a new faith, predominately a Marxist faith. The new poet works upon emotions as old as man to present a vision of reality that can be grasped only by the most alert, sensitive, forward-looking minds.

Believing that a power to manipulate sentences enlivens communication and that colleges and high schools should attempt to develop that power directly, the English faculty of Cornell University have developed a new method of training prospective English teachers in the grammar and rhetoric of the sentence (Charles W. Jones, "Syntax for Teachers," *School and Society*, December 7). By means of two seminar courses, meeting once a week for two hours, students preparing to teach English study grammar and syntax in October, tutor the freshmen enrolled in English O courses from November 1 until the end of January, and then, throughout the second semester, convert the mechanical elements of syntax into positive habits of writing emphatic prose. With the steady decline of proper linguistic training in America the study of language must be stressed within both secondary schools and colleges by some such means.

Analyzing the problem of the survey course in literature, Robert A. L. Mortvedt in the *Journal of Higher Education* for December asks whether the survey should be "Terminal or Germinal." If the teacher proceeds from Beowulf to Hardy, demonstrating only in the end the connection of literary tradition and contemporary life, he delays the essential concept too long. As soon as possible the student must be stirred to realize that

the tradition of English literature is vital and continuous. A practical method consists in presenting the survey together with contemporary literature and in continually developing individual reading interests in the whole field of English literature. For a considerable amount of time—say every other week—students spend their allotment of hours for the course on free reading, without textbook assignments. The teacher meets the students in small groups for individual reports of reading experiences and discussion. Thus students discover the relation of the early play to the whole dramatic tradition or the relation of the medieval romance to recent poetry and fiction. The sacrifice of class time from the standard materials may be compensated for by a greater weight of interpretation on fewer selections. At the same time this plan of conducting the survey makes literature more vital for the English major and helps to solve the problem of the student who merely wants a course in literature.

The book which created widespread enthusiasm for Lytton Strachey—his *Eminent Victorians*—made its way against all the anxieties of the year 1918. His lucid and penetrating essays, his rapier style with its effortless epigrams and coolness, gained a notoriety for all his historical writings (Leonard Bacon, "An Eminent Post-Victorian," *Yale Review*, winter). As a critic Strachey could discover excellence without being overwhelmed. Beyond the mere aesthetic, in his literary essays, he penetrated the psychologically significant layers of knowledge which enhanced the beauty and interest of his subjects.

Nevertheless, it begins to appear that this expert on questions of style and taste was in other connections a good deal like ordinary men. In the historical essays he substituted picturesque detail and fascinating preconception for reality until he became a master of phantasmagoria. The readable essay on Gordon of Khartoum, for example, filled with melodramatic rhetoric and caricature, suggests the misleading farragoes of Carlyle and Macaulay. Page after page of the essay depend upon Mannix' *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, a romance which Strachey accepted as authentic history. Strachey perhaps exemplifies the sedentary scholar's "disgusted irritation with men of action." When he turned the ray of his special intelligence on events, it proved to be fitful and distorting. It is better to turn to his works of literary criticism.

Edith Wharton and Theodore Dreiser appear as "The Lady and the Tiger" in a study of literary contrast by Alfred Kazin (*Virginia Quarterly Review*, winter). Edith Wharton lived in a nerveless society which found

authority in its own history and the meaning of life in its own conventions. Her education in this dying aristocracy and the ruthless demands of her marriage permanently stamped upon her the standards of the genteel. Her writing was not, however, a revolt but a protection against boredom. Unlike James, for whom the significance of his characters and their problems was psychological and universal, the novel served for Edith Wharton as an involuted expression of self. She never rose above personal difficulties. She could speak out plainly, with a curious irony; and the utter fatalism of her early novels expresses a sense of tragedy superior to that of any other novelist in her generation. But she could not tell the dynamic story of the vulgar eclipse of her class by the western capitalists because her imagination was limited to the sensitive and suffering aristocrat. Doom waiting for the pure in heart was her theme, in *Ethan Frome* as well as in *The House of Mirth*. She was ignorant of the poor; and though she disliked the emerging new class of brokers and industrialists as fiercely as the muckrakers, she did not understand them as a new and supreme condition in American society. She was merely offended. After 1920 she lost her interest in the craft of fiction and wrote mechanical magazine fiction only, because she had finally exhausted the need that drove her to literature.

Theodore Dreiser, on the contrary, was from the first so oppressed by suffering, by the spectacle of men struggling aimlessly and alone, that he was prepared to understand the very society that rejected him. In the penury of his early years cruelty and squalor were the palpable realities. As a young reporter in the convulsive nineties, he saw American society expanding as if to burst, the bitter shambles of revolt, the fight for power. In the figure of Yerkes, whom he portrayed in *The Titan*, he saw power become not an instrument but a way of life. Dreiser did not tinker with this society or reject it; he presented it as the only life he knew, in which "nothing is proved, all is permitted."

Dreiser's naturalism was not like that which Crane and Norris inherited—an intellectual reaction to romanticism—but it was his instinctive response to life. He belongs with the great peasant novelists, like Hamsun and Gorky, who have found in the boundless freedom of naturalism the only approximation of a life that is essentially brutal and disorderly. Dreiser had no desire to shock when he ingenuously wrote *Sister Carrie*, but the book by exploding in the face of genteel traditions made possible a new frankness in the American novel. His painful manner of writing could not be copied, but, having spoken for Americans in a speech as broken and blindly searching as common speech, he has been accepted

by Americans as one of the great folk writers—as a Langland or a Whitman.

How To Win Friends and Influence People is the best-selling book in Germany.

Oliver Wiswell was the fastest-selling book of 1940. It sold 335,000 copies between November 22, when it was published, and the end of December.

Somerset Maugham has recently said of fiction writers: "Writers of recent fiction have forgotten that action is the mainspring of the novel just as it is of the play. . . . They have eschewed the dramatic. . . . The serious novel of today is regrettably namby-pamby."

THE YEAR'S BEST SELLERS^{*}

FICTION

1. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, by Ernest Hemingway
2. *Oliver Wiswell*, by Kenneth Roberts
3. *How Green Was My Valley*, by Richard Llewellyn
4. *Mrs. Miniver*, by Jan Struther
5. *Kitty Foyle*, by Christopher Morley
6. *Native Son*, by Richard Wright
7. *The Nazarene*, by Sholem Asch
8. *Stars on the Sea*, by F. van Wyck Mason
9. *King's Row*, by H. Bedamann
10. *Night in Bombay*, by Louis Bromfield
11. *Foundation Stone*, by Lella Warren
12. *The Family*, by Nina Fedorova
13. *Portrait of Jennie*, by Robert Nathan
14. *Quietly My Captain Waits*, by Evelyn Eaton
15. *Mr. Skeffington*, by Elizabeth

^{*} Compiled from the wholesale records of the Baker & Taylor Co., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

NONFICTION

1. *Bet It's a Boy*, by B. B. Blunt
2. *Country Squire in the White House*, by John T. Flynn
3. *A Smattering of Ignorance*, by Oscar Levant
4. *Wave of the Future*, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh
5. *How To Read a Book*, by Mortimer J. Adler
6. *I Married Adventure*, by Osa Johnson
7. *The White Cliffs*, by A. D. Muller
8. *As I Remember Him*, by Hans Zinsser
9. *Europe in the Spring*, by Clare Boothe
10. *New England: Indian Summer*, by Van Wyck Brooks
11. *Days of Our Years*, by Pierre van Paassen
12. *A Treasury of the World's Great Letters*, by M. Lincoln Schuster
13. *Land below the Wind*, by Agnes Newton Keith

THE OUTSTANDING BOOKS OF 1940 AS SELECTED
BY REVIEWERS¹

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i> 2. <i>As I Remember Him</i> 3. <i>New England: Indian Summer</i> 4. <i>Audubon's America</i> 5. <i>Sapphira and the Slave Girl</i> 6. <i>Native Son</i> 7. <i>You Can't Go Home Again</i> 8. <i>Oliver Wiswell</i> 9. <i>The Trees</i> 10. <i>A Southerner Discovers New England</i> 11. <i>Verdun</i> 12. <i>The Beloved Returns</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. <i>Trelawny</i> 14. <i>Mrs. Miniver</i> 15. <i>A Man Named Grant</i> 16. <i>Country Editor</i> 17. <i>From Many Lands</i> 18. <i>A Treasury of the World's Great Letters</i> 19. <i>The Fire and the Wood</i> 20. <i>Embezzled Heaven</i> 21. <i>How Green Was My Valley</i> 22. <i>With Love and Irony</i> 23. <i>The Voice of Destruction</i> |
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¹ According to thirty reviewers who sent lists in response to a request from Baker and Taylor.

BOOKS

IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Out of the Night. By Jan Valtin. Alliance. \$3.50.

This terrifying account of intrigue and revolution is an autobiography of a German youth who was drawn into communism and became an organizer of labor on the sea. He was associated with all the communist leaders and was sent on world-missions. Caught by the Nazis and imprisoned, he tells the story of torture and brutalities. Finding at last that his party had sacrificed him to the Nazis, he escaped and wrote a book which will enable readers to understand the complete breakdown of European civilization.

The Giant Joshua. By Maurine Whipple. Houghton. \$2.75.

The time is the 1860's, the scene, an outpost in the Utah desert; a moving story of Mormonism at its best and worst. Suffering and hardship combine with integrity and genuine pioneer fortitude in this picture of the courageous Mormon woman's status and heroism and her reactions to polygamy.

No Stone Unturned. By Josephine Lawrence. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

But You Are Young and *If I Have Four Apples* have won a growing popularity for this author. Matty Russel in this new book is like Micawber, an unforgettable character.

Today and Forever: Stories of China. By Pearl S. Buck. John Day. \$2.50.

Although this is a collection of short stories, they are so arranged in sequence as to give a significant picture of the changes occurring in China. Some are of the social significance of certain phases of life a few years ago; some presage the immediate future.

Drink to Yesterday. By Manning Coles. Knopf. \$2.00.

An important World War story by the author of *Rogue Male*. The experiences of Kirk Brandt, British agent in Germany, are convincingly related.

The Earth Is the Lord's. By Taylor Caldwell. Scribner. \$2.50.

A Literary Guild selection for January is this story of Genghis Khan by the author of *Dynasty of Death*. A fascinating tale, superbly told. "Any resemblance between characters of this novel and personages living today is indignantly denied by the author. Ghost of Genghis Khan could notify author if such libelous rumor begins to circulate."

AP: The Story of News. By Oliver Granling. Illustrated by Henry C. Barrow. Rinehart. \$3.50.

The exciting history of the Associated Press told with the journalist's genius for vivid detail and based upon original sources, as well as hundreds of secondary references. One hundred years of history of historic events included in the narrative mark the rise of great journalists and the amazing advances in the technological phases of communication.

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. By Thomas Gray. With 30 woodcuts by J. J. Lankes and Preface by Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Harper. \$3.00.

Coffin's Preface shows convincingly that Mr. Lankes' woodcuts have put American content into the *Elegy*, as American readers have done for two hundred years. Poverty is reflected in a sharecropper's shack, and the "Animated Bust" is drawn in the figure of Abraham Lincoln. "But the great poem remains . . . for it has the light of life upon it. Our life, now."

Roger Fry: A Biography. By Virginia Woolf. Harcourt. \$3.50.

The life-story of an art critic chiefly known for his brilliant defense of post-impressionists and his influence upon modern painting in England and America. Lawyer, scientist, and painter, as well as critic, this many-sided personality has provided an excellent theme for Mrs. Woolf's luminous prose.

The Poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth. Edited from the journals by Hyman Eigerman. Columbia University Press. \$2.00.

By carefully selecting passages from the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth and arranging them in lines of free verse, Mr. Eigerman has elevated her writing from mere commentary on the poems of Wordsworth to poetry in its own right. The editor has been successful in finding those passages in *Alfoxden*, *Grasmere*, *Scotland*, *The Continent*, and *The Isle of Man* which possess unmistakable poetic quality.

Through the Night: A Mystery Play. By Florence Ryerson and Colin Clement.

A mystery play successfully produced in London, Glasgow, and Hollywood, abounding in bright lines and unexpected incidents, now available to the general reader. A paper-covered acting edition sells for \$0.75.

Brief Music. By Emmet Lavery. French. \$1.50.

A "sentimental" comedy of character with its setting on the campus of a woman's college.

The Saint in Miami. By Leslie Charteris. Crime Club. \$2.00.

A fifth-column story based upon possible, though fictional, facts of some significance.

Quick Service. By P. G. Wodehouse. Doubleday. \$2.00.

Wodehouse is at present held in a German concentration camp. *Quick Service* is, as usual, a clever story built upon farcical situations.

This Is the Schoolroom. By Nicholas Monsarrat. Knopf. \$2.50.

In this first novel by a young Englishman the hero, Marcus Hendricks, a Cambridge University student, thrust penniless upon a cold and warring world, suffers all the disillusionment and privations of many youth of the day. Unlike some of his brothers, he finds something to live for.

George Washington Slept Here. By Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. Random. \$2.00.

A very readable comedy; for house-builders and others.

He Looked for a City. By A. S. M. Hutchinson. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.50.

The life of a vicar in an English country parish is the theme of this very human narrative by the author of *If Winter Comes*.

Let Us Have Faith. By Helen Keller. Doubleday. \$1.00.

"A militant message of hope and courage."

Hawaii: A Profile in Pictures. By Merle Colby. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$1.00.

Excellent photographs and descriptions of Hawaii and its people.

The Legend of the Palm Tree. By Margaria Estrela Bandeira Duarte. Illustrated by Paulo Werneck. Grosset. \$1.00.

A Brazilian legend of the palm tree and its many contributions to the comfort of the people. In Brazil it won the National Prize Award in 1939; its translation and introduction to United States children is in the nature of a good-will gesture.

Louisiana in the Short Story. Edited by Lizzie Carter McVoy. Louisiana State University Press. \$2.75.

Fifteen short stories deal with various aspects of life in Louisiana. George Cable, Lafcadio Hearn, and such more recent writers as Stark Young and Roark Bradford are represented.

The Black Butterfly. By Carl H. Grabo. Packard & Co. \$1.75.

The sorrow and disillusionment of our times find expression in these lyrics and sonnets by a well-known critic and novelist. The poems, written chiefly in conventional molds, possess an intellectuality which at times overshadows the warmth and vividness of the imagery.

Bronson Alcott, Teacher. By Dorothy McCuskey. Macmillan. \$1.90.

Bronson Alcott, known to many as the father of the more famous Louisa Alcott, and portrayed in Odell Shepard's *Pedlar's Progress* as one of the eminent transcendentalists, is here portrayed as the schoolmaster and lover of children. Although the original form of this book was a doctoral dissertation based on the Alcott journals, it is written with a simplicity and human appeal which should delight cultivated readers everywhere. The book recently won the Third Research Award of Kappa Delta Pi on recommendation of a committee of distinguished educators.

Selling What You Write. By Donald MacCampbell. Crowell. \$2.00.

An editor and literary agent gives practical advice to young writers concerning the preparation of literary material for marketing. The volume includes a complete and up-to-date list of publishers, literary agents, magazine markets, and requirements.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

The Background for College Teaching. By Luella Cole. Rinehart. \$3.50.

A pioneer volume on the problems of teaching at the college level, presenting objectively such data as are now available concerning the nature of the college population, the characteristics of the youth of college age, new developments in college curriculums throughout the country, provisions for inferior and superior students, and such factors as class size, the teacher's load, academic freedom, salaries, legal status, and the like. As a summary of current thinking and current knowledge concerning college instruction it reveals astonishing accomplishments in an area commonly thought to be undeveloped and identifies those problems which are most in need of further study.

Drama Festivals and Contests. By Ernest Bavely. Baker's Plays (Boston).

A reprinting of chapters originally published in a yearbook of drama festivals and containing practical aids for the director of tournament plays. One chapter describes the historical development and values of drama festivals; others deal with the choice, casting, directing, and evaluation of the play.

Nineteenth-Century Studies. Collected and edited by Herbert Davis, William C. DeVane, and R. C. Bald. Cornell University Press. \$3.00.

Eight essays in the literature of the nineteenth century by members of the department of English at Cornell University: "Coleridge and *The Ancient Mariner*," "Early Nineteenth-Century Letters Hitherto Unpublished," "Byron and the Literary Courses of the Turkish Tales," "Carlyle and Fiction," "Browning and the Spirit of Greece," "Ruskin and His Followers," "William Morris and the Poetry of Escape," and "A Study of *The Way of All Flesh*." Several of the studies utilize new sources to provide reinterpretation of men and letters in this period.

Essays on the Teaching of English. In honor of Charles Swain Thomas. Harvard University Press. \$2.50.

"Nothing quite like educating a hundred million people has ever been attempted before," declares Professor Gay in his Introduction to this remarkable collection of essays. In this observation is expressed a realization basic to many of the discussions in the book. The contributors are among the most able and famous of American teachers of English—leaders like Howard Mumford Jones, Dora V. Smith, Angela Broening, Allan Abbott, Lou LaBrant, Robert C. Pooley, and many others. They discuss from a variety of points of view the problems and objectives of the teaching of English in the world of today.

What Is Good English? By Charles C. Fries. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Charles C. Fries.

In these five essays on the standards of acceptable English Professor Fries makes clear by abundant illustration the principle that the rules of language correctness are

derived from usage rather than the arbitrary authority of a linguist, a textbook-maker, or a lexicographer. Separate chapters are devoted to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and the scientific and artistic points of view in language.

Slang. By Eric Partridge. Tract LV of the Society for Pure English. Oxford University Press. \$0.75.

A highly informative pamphlet on the etymology, definition, and synonyms of the word "slang," its origin and uses, the characteristics of slang, and various types of slang in current use. Perhaps most interesting of the sections at the present time are those giving illustrations of slang words and phrases originated in the present conflict between England and the Axis powers.

The Growth of American English, Book I. By William A. Craigie. Tract LVI of the Society for Pure English. Oxford University Press. \$0.75.

These general observations on the growth of American English are based upon the research carried on in connection with the compilation of the *Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*, of which 1,140 pages have already been published by the University of Chicago Press.

Eastern Public Speaking Conference: 1940. Edited by Harold F. Harding with the assistance of Agnes I. Allardyce and W. Hayes Yeager. Wilson.

These papers and addresses delivered at the thirty-first annual meeting of the Eastern Public Speaking Conference excel in quality and pertinence the usual level of convention addresses. Papers by Ordway Tead, Harold Benjamin, Frank Cushman, Adelaide Patterson, George H. Gallup, and many other educators and speech specialists together constitute an excellent survey of current thinking in the field.

The English Ode from Milton to Keats. By George N. Shuster. Columbia University Press. \$3.00.

A study of the development of the ode through two hundred years of English poetic history as used by writers diverse in stature and outlook. Special consideration is given to the pre-Miltonic ode, its use by Milton and the metaphysical poets, and the development of this verse form in succeeding periods. Dr. Shuster is author of *The Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature* and a former editor of the *Commonweal*.

The Early Plays of James A. Herne: With Act IV of "Griffith Davenport." With an Introduction by Arthur Hobson Quinn. Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

Another in the series of "America's Lost Plays" (Vol. VII) presenting four plays by a nineteenth-century actor and playwright: *Within an Inch of His Life*, *The Minute Men of 1774-1775*, *Drifting Apart*, and *The Reverend Griffith Davenport*.

Italian Nationalism and English Letters. By Harry W. Rudman. Columbia University Press. \$3.25.

The revival of Italian nationalism from 1850 to 1870, particularly through the efforts of Mazzini (in exile in England for a time), Cavour, and Garibaldi, found reflection in

the work of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Hazlitt, the Brownings, Arnold, Meredith, Swinburne, and many other English writers, as well as in countless pamphlets, novels, poems, plays, and travel accounts. In this volume the struggles and perils of the nationalist heroes are recounted and the critical or admiring references in English literature in the Victorian period cited in relation to each of the historic incidents.

The Origin of Printing in Europe. By Pierce Butler. University of Chicago Press. \$1.50.

The fascinating story of the invention and the mechanical development of printing, based on specimens of early printing and the testimony of contemporary documents. Mr. Butler believes that printing, like the motor car and the radio, originated in several places at once and that it appeared in response to the need of mechanical aids in the scribal process in the transition from medieval to modern culture.

English Word Lists. By Charles C. Fries with the co-operation of A. Aileen Traver. American Council on Education.

An analysis and evaluation of numerous word lists, such as word counts to aid stenographers, word lists for the teaching of spelling, reading vocabularies, foreign-language word counts, measures of vocabulary size, and lists for English as a foreign language. Among those selected for special comment are Ogden's *Basic English List*, the West *Definition Vocabulary*, the Palmer *One Thousand-Word Radius*, the Aiken *Middle English List*, and the Thorndike *Word List*. The authors suggest the need for further investigation of words in colloquial English and the patterns of derivatives with the extension of meaning produced by the sound elements of these words, as well as the construction of word lists to meet the diverse language needs of learners at differing age levels and of differing social outlook.

Annals of English Drama: 875-1700. By Alfred Harbage. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

The main section of this book lists the English plays alphabetically by author under each successive year with the title, the year of performance, the type of play, the group under whose auspices the play was produced (King's Men, Queen's Revels, Prince Henry's, and the like), the dates of the first edition of printed plays, and the date of the latest modern edition of the play. Additional sections supply indexes of English playwrights, English plays, foreign playwrights, foreign plays, dramatic companies, and a descriptive list of theaters. Catalog numbers and locations of dramatic companies and a descriptive list of theaters, catalog numbers, and locations of extant play manuscripts are included in the Appendix.

Shakespeare and Other Masters. By Elmer Edgar Stoll. Harvard University Press. \$4.50.

A series of relatively independent studies by a distinguished Shakespeare scholar. Professor Stoll makes comparison between Shakespeare and Sophocles, Shakespeare and Jonson, and Shakespeare and Homer, in their treatment of character, tradition, human relations, and artistic form. Separate chapters deal with the dramatic texture in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and "The Tragic Fallacy."

Reason, Rule, and Revolt in English Classicism. By Francis Gallaway. Scribner. \$3.00.

These essays on the literary precepts of the Classical Age and the stirrings of revolt present synthetically the artistic outlook of a period on which libraries of research monographs have been written. Professor Gallaway has carefully compared the opinions of leading eighteenth-century writers in an effort to determine the real intellectual and aesthetic climate of the time.

The Last Duel in Spain and Other Plays. By John Howard Payne. Edited by Codman Hislop and W. R. Richardson. Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

The second volume of two volumes of plays by John Howard Payne included in the series of "America's Lost Plays," commented upon in earlier issues of the *English Journal*. *The Last Duel in Spain* is a romantic comedy of "heroic" love intrigue which was never performed.

The Rise of Romantic Hellenism in English Literature: 1732-1786. By Bernard Herbert Stern. Menasha, Wis.: Banta.

A study of romantic Hellenism; a nostalgic admiration of the ancient Greek civilization, as reflected in an interest in modern Greece found in the work of eighteenth-century English writers.

Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, Vol. XXV. Collected by Percy Simpson. Oxford University Press. \$2.50.

The six scholarly essays included in the volume are: "Housman: 1939," by H. W. Darrod; "The Language of the *Kingis Quair*," by Sir W. A. Craigie; "Sir Walter Raleigh's Farewell Letter to his Wife in 1603: A Question of Authenticity," by Agnes M. C. Latham; "Eighteenth-Century Poetic Diction," by Geoffrey Tillotson; "Realism in English Poetry," by V. de Sola Pinto; and "Curiosities in a Medieval Manuscript," by C. L. Wrenn.

FOR STUDENTS

Technical Exposition. By Leslie M. Oliver. McGraw-Hill. \$1.50.

A textbook for the advanced college course in English composition for the engineering student. The volume assumes mastery of certain basic knowledge in skills and emphasizes the special problems of technical writing, research papers and reports, and the business letter. A few elementary aids on punctuation and vocabulary are included at the end.

Best Broadcasts of 1939-40. Selected and edited by Max Wylie. Whittlesey. \$3.00.

The editor of this volume apologizes for some of the material in it on the ground that it has been dictated by the public taste and represents an honest cross-section of American opinion, in contrast to the British radio schoolmaster and the German radio drillmaster. In spite of this misrepresentation of the American public the volume will please readers of widely varying interests. "The Lone Ranger," here presented as the

best western radio has to offer the American public in 1939-40, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Bob Hope, and others in the best comedies, Major George Fielding Eliot, Elmer Davis, Raymond Gram Swing, and others under the heading, "Best News Reporting," and many other classifications offer a colorful and probably accurate representation of radio in its present stage of development.

Types of English: Drama. Edited by John W. Ashton. Macmillan. \$1.50.

Twelve types of English plays from medieval mystery and morality plays to the realistic tragedies of Eugene O'Neill. One famous play is used to illustrate each of the types.

Business Reports: Investigation and Presentation. By Alta Gwinn Saunders and Chester Reed Anderson. 2d ed. McGraw-Hill. \$3.50.

As modern business firms rely increasingly upon research and research reports as a guide to management, technical manuals such as this become indispensable. Supported by numerous illustrations and embracing a wide variety of business problems, this book provides materials for an advanced course in commercial English. Chapters on the collection of data through standard techniques, the planning and the writing of a report, and the preparation of tables and charts, as well as reference sections on the mechanics of English, are presented along with five appendixes or reference sections.

American Junior Colleges. Edited by Walter Crosby Eells. 1940 ed. American Council on Education. \$3.50.

A companion volume to the well-known handbook called *American Universities and Colleges*. This list of 494 junior colleges, containing such information as accreditation, requirements, fees, staff, enrolment, and the like, was prepared by the American Council on Education in co-operation with the American Association of Junior Colleges.

Jefferson. By Albert J. Nock. National Home Library Foundation. \$0.75.

The life of Thomas Jefferson raises political and social issues as significant today as in the lifetime of this great president. The National Home Library Foundation has performed a notable service in producing this low-cost edition of the successful biography originally published by Harcourt, Brace & Co. in 1926.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shanty, Gentleman. By Laurence Sterne. Edited by James Aiken Work. Odyssey Press. \$1.00.

The full text of *Tristram Shanty*, with the original typographical peculiarities, punctuation, spelling, and curious page and chapter arrangement, along with an introduction containing a biography of Sterne and an account of the reception given the book in Sterne's own time. The college student will be greatly aided in the enjoyment of the book by the numerous explanatory footnotes.

A Handbook of the Bible. By Gerald E. SeBoyar. Crofts. \$1.25.

An alphabetical list of the principal persons and places of the Bible, with explanatory notes and informative references to biblical allusions and scenes in modern literature, art, and music.

From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy, Vol. II. Edited by Robert Shafer. New ed. Odyssey Press. \$3.00.

This second volume of the popular college anthology of English literature contains eleven hundred pages of poetry and prose from Sheridan and Cowper down to Housman and Masfield. Critical introductions to each of the major periods (including the post-World War period not included in the anthology) are supplied in addition to the biographical introduction to each writer. The volume is attractively illustrated with contemporary scenes by famous artists, manuscript and title-pages from early editions, and portraits.

The Gallic War of Julius Caesar. Translated into English by Eugene I. Burdock. Noble & Noble. \$1.25.

The appearance at this time of Caesar's story of the invasion of France by the Teutons and of Britain by the Romans should interest the general reader as well as the student of world-literature and the classical languages.

Stops: A Handbook for Those Who Know Their Punctuation and for Those Who Aren't Quite Sure. Introduction by Robert M. Gay. Middlebury College Press. \$1.00.

Rules governing the various marks of punctuation, illustrated with quotations contributed by members of the Bread Loaf School of English. The attractive and original format was planned and the entire book produced in the Graphic Arts Workshop of the Bread Loaf printers.

Stories from the Husk. Edited by Clyde Tull and Anya Plummer. Mount Vernon, Iowa: English Club of Cornell College. \$2.00.

A book of 162 pages designed and handset by undergraduate students of English at Cornell College, containing the best eighteen stories from the files of the student literary magazine, the *Husk*. The life of the midwestern town and countryside as seen and felt by young people stirs in these pages. One of the sketches is by Winifred Van Etten, who, since its original publication in the *Husk*, incorporated it in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Little, Brown novel, *I Am the Fox*.

Types of English: Fiction. Edited by Hardin Craig and John W. Dodds. Macmillan. \$1.50.

These illustrative selections from English fiction include writers of every period, from Mandeville to Virginia Woolf. In the discriminating selection, the helpful Introduction, and the suggestions for further reading the collection serves as an excellent introduction to the reading of fiction.

Types of English: Poetry. By Rudolf Kirk and Clara Marburg Kirk. Macmillan. \$1.50.

English poems classified chronologically under "Narrative," "Lyric," and "Didactic" poetry, with fairly extensive introductory essays upon each of the types. The selections are conveniently indexed according to authors, titles, and first lines.

Sarah Lawrence Studies, 1940: A Selection of Studies by Undergraduates. Bronxville, N.Y.: Sarah Lawrence College.

Of greatest interest to students of English in this collection of studies from various college fields are the poems and stories by extraordinarily talented students of this well-known experimental college.

Public Speaking Today. By William G. Hoffman. Whittlesey House. \$2.75.

Although this textbook in public speaking considers the more common types of speech, including radio and round table, it is concerned primarily with the problems of the public address—the inspirational speech, after-dinner speech, anniversary address, the speech of popular exposition, and the speech that persuades. The author writes vividly and often amusingly about the multitudinous problems of selecting a subject, preparing and organizing a speech, and delivering it effectively.

Byron: Poetry and Prose. With essays by Scott, Hazlitt, Macaulay, etc. Introduction by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Notes by D. Nichol Smith. Oxford University Press. \$1.25.

The notes are designed to promote intelligent and sympathetic reading. Typography is clear and dignified.

Putting Words to Work. Edward N. Teall. Appleton-Century. \$2.50.

An effort to popularize the study of English grammar; somewhat more entertaining than illuminating.

From Descartes to Kant: Readings in the Philosophy of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. By T. V. Smith and Marjorie Grene. University of Chicago Press. \$4.50.

Selections from the philosophical writings of Erasmus, Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Newton, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.

A College Book of American Literature: Briefer Course. Edited by Milton Ellis, Louise Pound, and George Weida Spohn. American. \$3.00.

A chronologically arranged anthology of American poetry and prose, giving major attention to nineteenth-century writings. A chart presenting the chronology of American writers, as well as a special alphabetical list of authors, is provided.

The Coming of Age of the Carolina Playmakers. (The June, 1940, issue of the *North Carolina Playbook*, ed. Frederick H. Koch.) Edited by Archibald Henderson. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Carolina Playmakers, Inc.

The commemorative issue of a magazine devoted to the work of the enterprising Carolina Playmakers and the Carolina Dramatic Association. Articles by Frederick H. Koch, Ralph Edmonds, Arthur H. Quinn, and George R. Coffman survey the American folk theater, the Negro drama in the South, and the present status of play production in America.

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